



**NO.1** FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS  
**Imagine**

**FX**



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**HUNGER  
GAMES**

Draw the girl on fire  
with Ilya Kuvshinov

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VIDEO TUITION

**PAINT EXPLOSIVE**

**MANGA ART**

Take on League of Legends feisty favourite  
Jinx in **Alvin Lee's** compelling workshop

Future

**ARTIST INSIGHT**

**THE SHIFLETT BROTHERS'  
SCULPTING MASTERCLASS**

KD STANTON AND HIS  
POWERFUL PERSPECTIVES

**PRO TIPS TO GENERATE  
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Japanese anime



**DEVIL YOU KNOW!** LAURA SAVA OFFERS TIPS ON CREATING STUNNING CARD ART





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# Welcome... to a dose of art mojo



It was a blast to work with Alvin Lee on our rocket-riding Jinx cover. She's one of our favourite characters (Jinx, not Alvin) from the mighty game League of Legends, and the Riot Games team – the guys and gals behind the online behemoth – were super cool to work with. Head over to page 68 and let Alvin take you through the image's creation.

We've delved into the world of anime this issue, looking at the current toon trends from Japan (page 40). Also, not many people know this, but if you pause an anime, it magically turns into 'a manga'... only joking! But after looking at the art of man-eating yet emotionally complex titans and girl warriors with sentient, blood-drinking school uniforms (what now?!), it's a world of imaginative art styles to get juiced up by.

If you want some eye-candy backed up by hefty art thinks, Laura Sava's card art workshop should tickle your chin (page 78). I love reading up on art theory, exploring patterns in beauty, breaking down why a flat image can invoke a response. It can be through the use of lines or the perspective you offer the viewer. KD Stanton knows all about that, with his super-cinematic images on page 48.

If you're not inspired by all that, or if you're currently going through a tough spot with your art, fear not! On page 20 we speak to some of our favourite artists about how they regained their art mojo after losing it. It's a piece that will hopefully help you start 2016 fired up to make your best art yet. Merry New Year!

*Beren*

**Beren Neale, Acting Editor**  
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*Our special cover for subscribers this issue.*



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## Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 8 for the best new art ➡➡





## ImagineFX Workshops

Advice and techniques from pro artists...



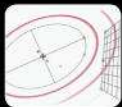
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**DOWNLOAD RESOURCES** Turn over the page for this issue's art assets



League of Legends character art

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Mark Zug





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**ImagineFX**

# Resources

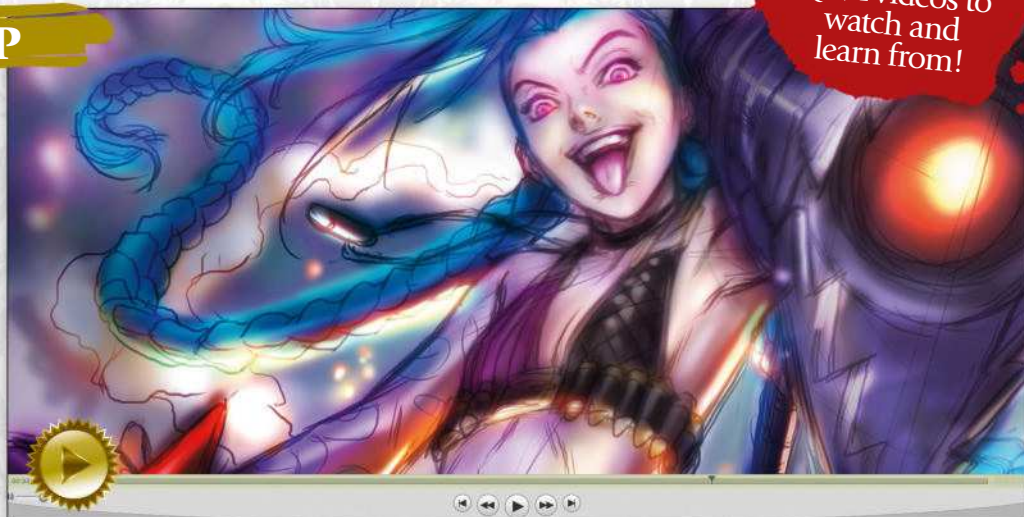
Getting hold of all of this issue's videos, artwork and brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at <http://ifxm.ag/hi131jinx>

**OVER 11 HOURS**  
of workshop and Q&A videos to watch and learn from!

## COVER WORKSHOP

### Paint game character Jinx

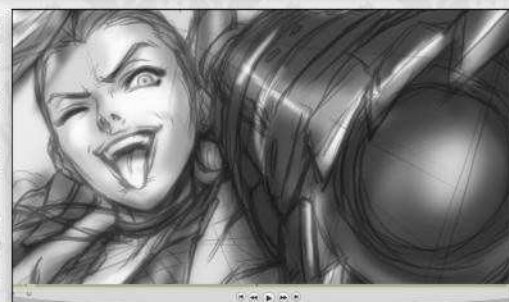
Alvin Lee shows how he captures the essence of the feisty League of Legends playable character



### GET YOUR RESOURCES

You're three steps away from this issue's resource files...

- 1 Go to the website**  
Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar): <http://ifxm.ag/hi131jinx>
- 2 Find the files you want**  
Search through the list of resources to watch or download.
- 3 Download what you need**  
You can download all of the files at once, or individually.



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# EXCLUSIVE VIDEO TUTORIAL!

Watch our videos to gain a unique insight into how our artists create their stunning art



## Ilya Kuvshinov

Learn how treating a painting as if it's a multi-layered 3D model can help you portray a compelling film character, such as Katniss Everdeen from The Hunger Games.  
**Plus WIPs, brushes and final image**



## Sara Forlenza

Be clever with composition in order to paint a group showing a mix of emotions.  
**Plus WIPs and final image**



## Marcel van Vuuren

Understand the differences between shiny and matt in order to realistically depict reflected light from worn metal surfaces – in this case, in a sci-fi scene.  
**Plus WIPs and final image**



## Tom Foster

Think about composition angles to create dynamic yet natural-flowing page layouts.  
**Plus WIPs and final image**



## Sara Forlenza

Pay close attention to a banner's design when depicting them flying in the wind.  
**Plus WIPs and final image**



## Tom Foster

Understand underlying anatomy to create a variety of comic characters' faces.  
**Plus WIPs and final image**



## Luca Nemolato

Watch a clip from Sci-Fi Costume Design in ZBrush, in which the artist covers character sculpting and rendering.

**AND ALL THIS!** WIPs and finished art available to download, by professional artists from around the world including Sai Foo, Leesha Hannigan, Ilya Kuvshinov, Alvin Lee, Brynn Metheney, Katarzyna Oleska, Laura Sava, the Shiftlett brothers and Svetlana Tigai.

## 136 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING...

### SUPER SOFT ROUND BRUSH

Svetlana Tigai uses this brush for a soft transition between colours.

### LACE

The lace brush Laura Sava uses when a costume needs something extra.

### ELLIPTICAL

Ilya Kuvshinov finds this handy for sculpting big shapes and sketching.





# Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



## Alyssa Winans

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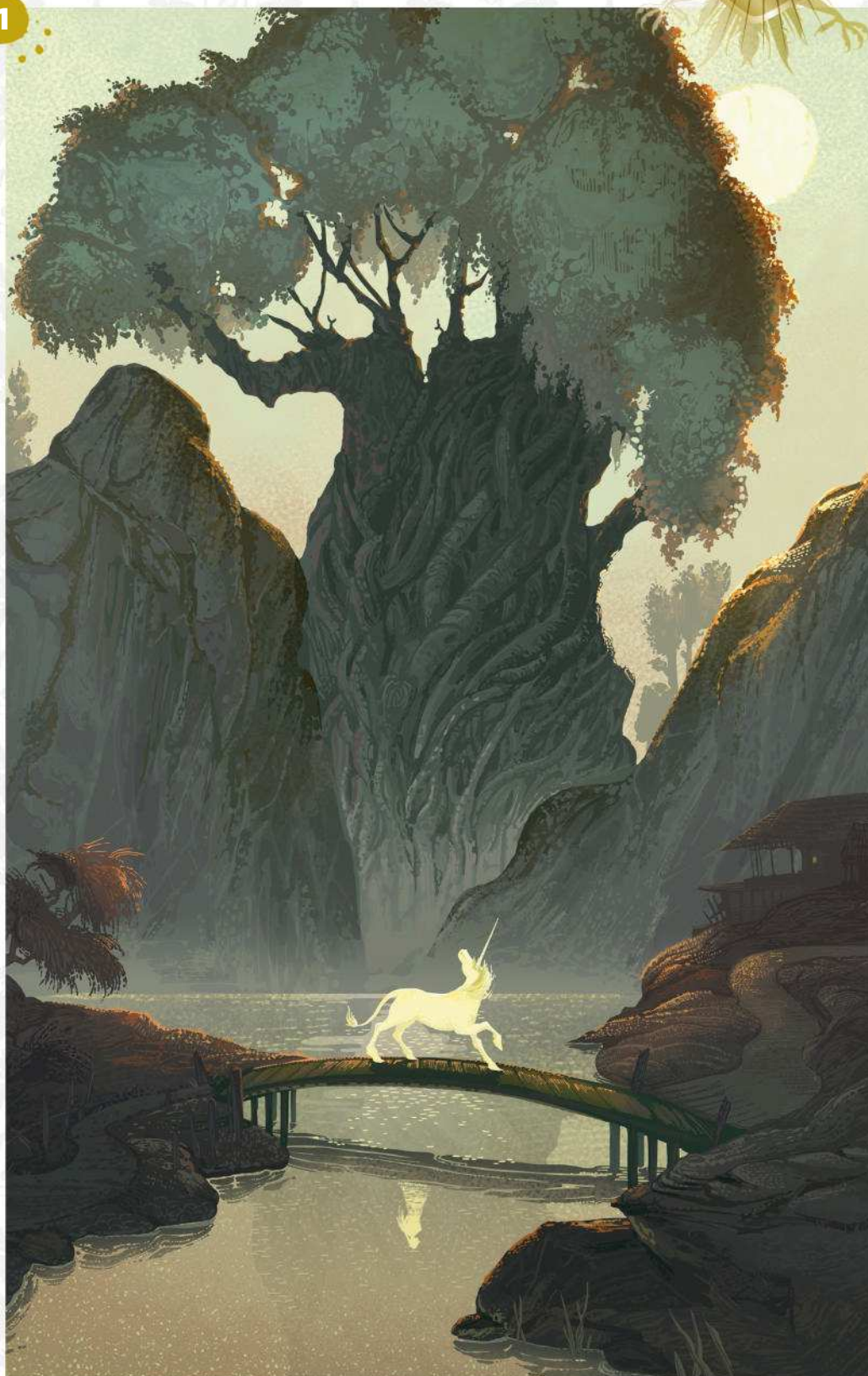
**MEDIA:** Photoshop



Alyssa credits growing up in Illinois with her unusual interest in sketching both corn and clouds, "I was fortunate enough to have a fantastic local library, and for the early part of my life I enjoyed reading and writing/drawing stories with my best friend," she says. Not much has changed, although she's now more interested in surreal narratives and giant cosmic deities.

"Gouache and Photoshop are my favourite media," reveals Alyssa, "because they enable me to play with vivid colour palettes and 'drawn texture', both of which heavily inform the style of my work."

1



**1 MAN'S ROAD** "The composition for this piece came from a rejected thumbnail sketch for another project. From there, I combined my interest in the naturalistic equine form with my predilection for unicorn narratives, a childhood fascination which adulthood has yet to fully remove."

**2 PEACEFUL PROTEST** "Many recent events on the news have been negative and painful. At the same time, I've been impressed by the power and ferocity of non-violent approaches to change. I created this piece to remind myself of that."







## Artist crit

**Comic artist Emma Rios  
 admires Peaceful Protest**



"The beautiful diagonal and the subtle low angle suggest power, while the high contrast in the palette and texture creates engaging shapes. And the subtle lighting enables Alyssa to use few tones without losing detail."



**Amit Dutta**

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**MEDIA:** Krita, Blender, SketchUp



When working as a technical research analyst Amit realised it was finally time to stop dreaming about becoming an artist and get serious. "For the next three years I dedicated all my free time to practice. I ate pixels and drank huge doses of monitor radiation. I gradually upped my skills and destroyed my social life," he recalls.

Amit finally left his job this year and going freelance full-time has given the artist a deep sense of satisfaction, but it's also brought new challenges. "I'm inspired by good science fiction, often dystopian, and my work tends to be dark and moody."

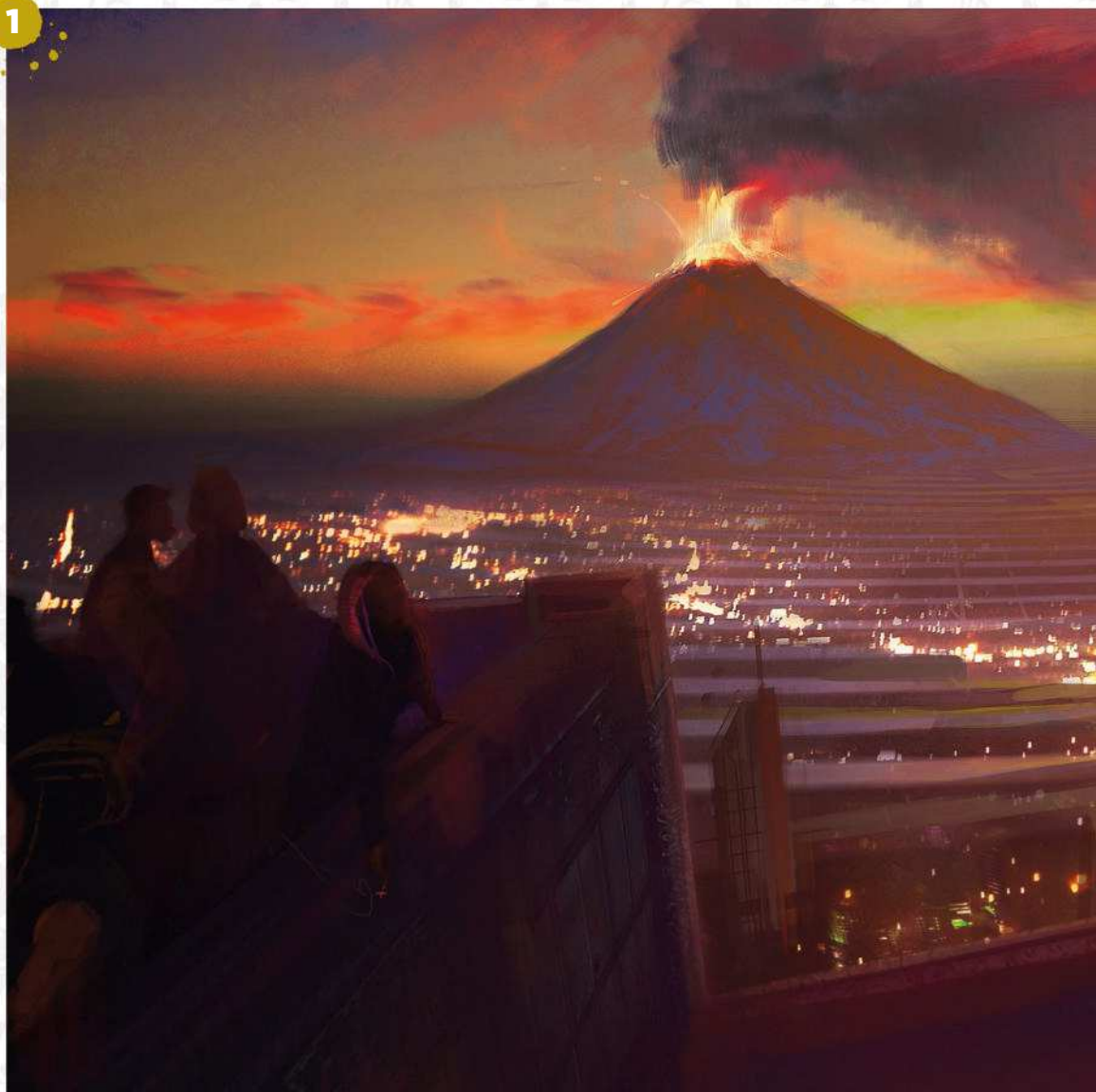
**IMAGINEFX CRIT**



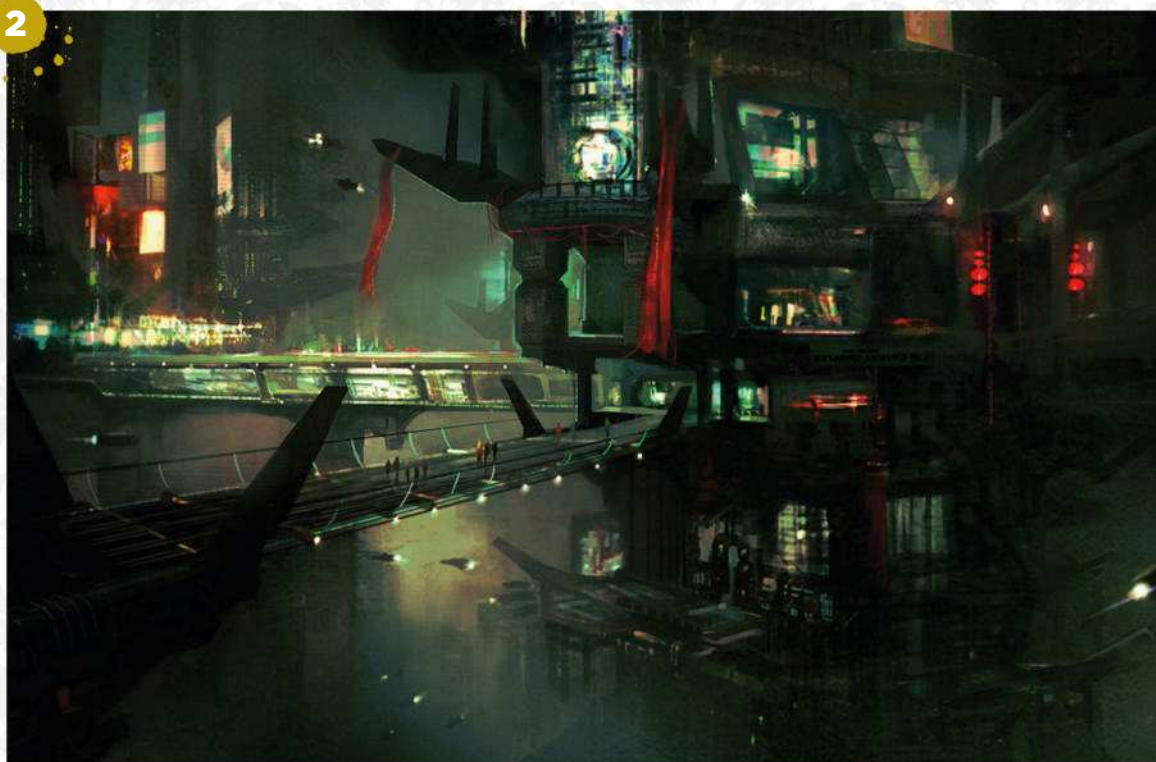
"Amit's hard work and dedication to the craft has really paid off (who needs a social life anyway?). His environment artworks demonstrate imagination, scale and atmosphere, and show just enough details to pull in the viewer."

Cliff Hope,  
Operations Editor

1



2



**1 VURT: THE MAZE** "This was done for an RPG based on Jeff Noon's Vurt novels. The main figure has taken a vurt feather and sees the virtual elements of a maze, volcano and dreamsnake appear amongst the real city of future Manchester. I tried to create a surreal vibe throughout the image."

**2 GEMINI RISING** "An older piece when I first started trying to integrate photobashing into my process. Syd Mead's designs for Blade Runner still have a lasting influence on me to this day, as is evident in this piece."

**3 THE LAST OUTPOST** "A personal piece where the title was used as a simple prompt. This is one of those paintings which painted itself. I'm not sure I've since reached quite that same level of effortless flow in the painting process that I did during this."





3



**+ Jacqui Davis**

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop



Jacqui has spent the past three years as a freelance illustrator, creating art for board games and children's publications.

"I work primarily in Photoshop with my trusty Cintiq," she reveals. "I started out learning to be a 2D animator, so the tablet reminds me of the old light boxes. My terrible dancing showed me that I had no sense of timing and I soon decided to stick with my first love, which was illustration."

While she works Jacqui usually has either a good fantasy show or documentary playing ("Who doesn't love David Attenborough?"), which is where she gets a lot of ideas for her personal work.

**IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"Excellent choices of lighting, colour and composition from Jacqui, whose freelance career must be going from strength to strength. The marching elephants in her Formula E piece has the feel of a musical number from a Disney cartoon."

**Beren Neale,**  
Acting Editor

**1 LION SLEEPS TONIGHT** "I had a couple of weeks completely client free, so I decided to be a bit self-indulgent and paint one of my characters. It was the first piece I'd painted using masks in Photoshop and wow, did they save me a lot of time!"

**2 FORMULA E** "One of my first board games was Formula E for Game Salute. The art director was great to work with and helped a lot with this piece. I'll always look back on this painting fondly."

**3 ARCTIC FOX** "One of my favourite TV shows growing up was The Animals of Farthing Wood. I later read the books, and this piece is a homage to both. I spend a lot of time drawing my own band of foxes and it was really my first ventures into character creation."

**4 IN THE WOODS** "I feel I tend to use quite static poses, so in this piece I was trying to go for something with a bit more action than I usually do. Halfway through I accidentally flattened the file and almost abandoned it, but was glad that I didn't. When I do non-client work I usually try to do something new and here I worked on trying to create an atmosphere with dappled light."

1





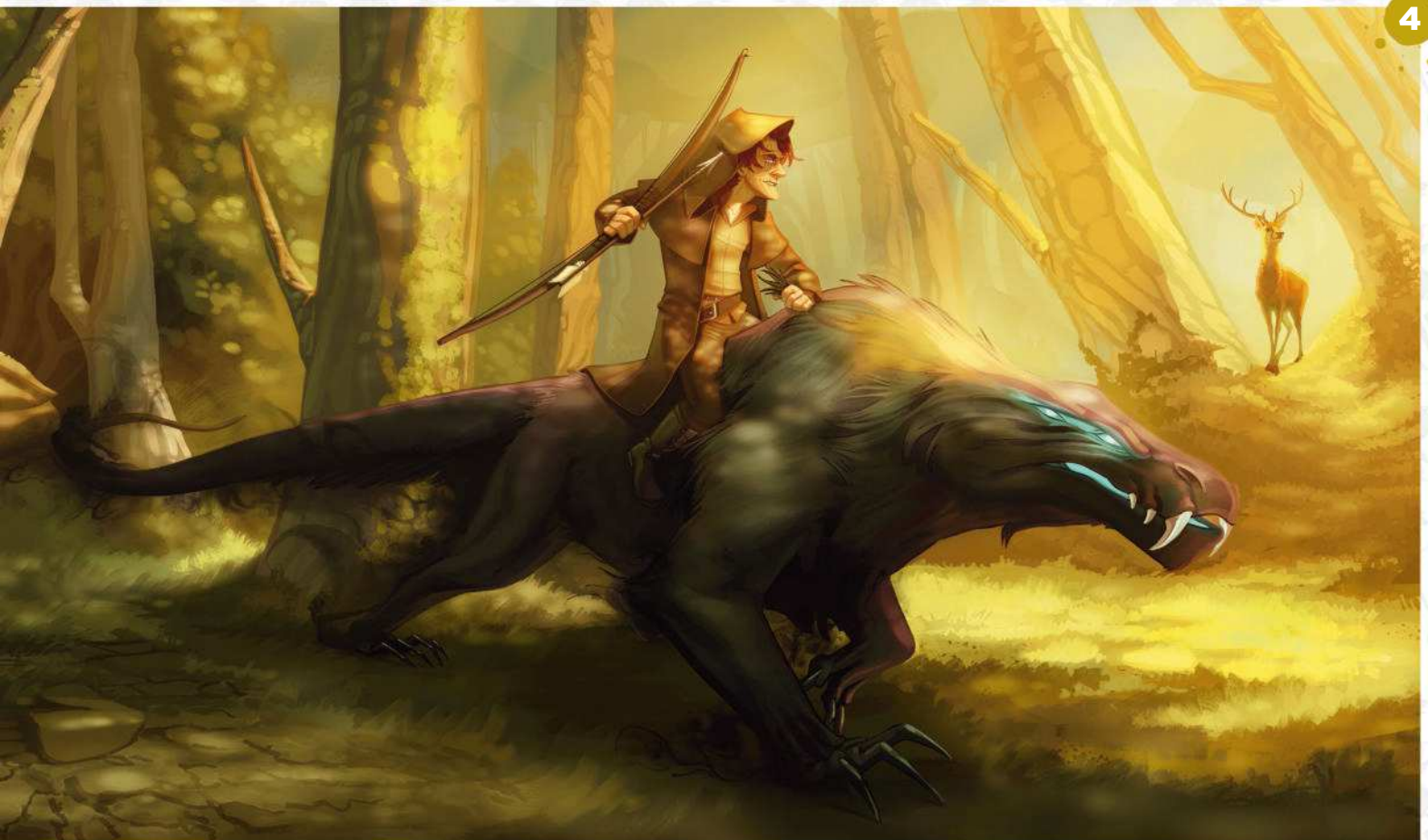
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3



4





1



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Growing up in an artistic family, aspiring to the works of classic illustrators such as NC Wyeth and JC Leyendecker, Alicia now works as a freelance illustrator based in Texas. Her studies included sculpture and digital art, and her passion is strong narratives. "I love portraying everything between an action-packed adventure to a simple evocative visual. The more fantastic, the better," she says.

Alicia also inserts a graphic sensibility, and a love of line art: "Comics are a big love and influence, particularly Hugo Pratt and Sergio Toppi."

2



### 1 LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

"Hollow has everything enjoyable to paint: high-contrast, action, horses and gothic imagery. There was quite a bit of historical research behind the piece, such as the Hessian uniform and the early 1800s clothing. After that, it was a just a matter of the colour palette pulling the mood together."

### 2 A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT

"Internet rabbit-trailing, I happened upon the Wikipedia summary for Mark Twain's novel. It mentioned a scene of the 19th century American hero having to pull out his guns and handle an army of armoured knights. Why has this never been on the cover? Who wouldn't want to read that?"

### 3 MEDUSOZOA

"I had in mind a different kind of mermaid with this portfolio piece. I could picture her clearly, with a tendril-like human body emerging from a jellyfish bell. She languidly floats following her head along the bottom of the coral reef, with fish weaving in and out at their peril."

3





## **Biddy Seiveno**

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A Memphis College of Art graduate, Biddy's painting method combines traditional and digital media. "A few of my

inspirations are Sterling Hundley, JC Leyendecker, Dean Cornwell, Arthur Rackham as well as more modern inspirations such as Wylie Beckert and Lois Van Baarle," she reveals.

Her work centres around mood and atmosphere as she tries to force herself to focus on her weaknesses. "My goal remains to work on my artistic voice and to find a happy medium between my love for all things cute and creepy."

**1 DARKNESS IN THE DEPTHS** "I'd been avoiding doing detailed environments, so this was my piece trying to break out of my comfort zone and tackle one of my weaknesses. It took a lot of struggling and starting from scratch before I landed on a product I was content with."

**2 SEAFARER'S WEAKNESS** "I was keen to break out of doing spot illustrations and grow. I wanted to focus on the character and story-telling versus the mood of the entire piece."

1



2





**Jenn Tran**

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MEDIA: Photoshop, SketchUp, Maya



Currently a concept artist at Harebrained Schemes, Jenn also freelances as a fantasy illustrator and has worked for the likes of Volta and Fantasy Flight Games. "With my artwork, I love to introduce a sense of mystery and historical storytelling, combining living cultures with hints at lost civilisations," she says.

"I'm also fascinated by themes of feminine power and beauty, and work to incorporate them into my images when it feels relevant."

Influences such as animation, comics, Tolkien, Miyazaki and the myriad of amazing fantasy illustrators working today help to shape Jenn's artistic choices, which she then works to put her own spin on.

1



2



**1 CINDERBORN** "This illustration was done for a Golem Arcana campaign, produced by Harebrained Schemes. The goal was to depict a battle taking place in the forest, where corrupted tree spirits were attacking golems and forest dwellers. The challenge here was that the same image had to appear in multiple contexts (banners, in-game screens and so on) and working within those limitations."

**2 THE SLUMS** "This was a fun mood exploration for a cancelled project that enabled me to integrate fantasy characters into a cyberpunk world. The goal was to create a sense of hopelessness and people struggling against their surroundings, while also showing that they have adapted and can hold their own against the elements and nearby enemies."

**3 SACRED MAHATAVI** "This was another Golem Arcana campaign image. In this piece, I was depicting a sacred tree that heals players: a place of tranquility and safety. To convey this mood, I chose a palette that felt calm and relaxing, and framed the golem within the giant roots to give a sense of protection."

**4 SLEEPING ANCIENT ONE** "Inspired by Sergey Kolesov's image Mermaid, this piece depicts Ancient Ones, who are beings with incredible control and manipulation over golems. They take gifts of mana from supplicants (players) and in turn bestow miracles, blessings and curses on the battlefield."

3







**IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"Sleeping Ancient One is the piece that catches my eye. Jenn's choice of a bird's eye view conveys the scale of the Ancient Ones, and the calm, clear waters reinforce the scene's somnolent tone."

**Daniel Vincent,**  
Art Editor



## + Kirsty Rollinson

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Kirsty decided in her early 30s that she wanted to retrain as an illustrator. She says, "I probably learnt more in those years through making mistakes than anything!" With some online courses and dropping her social life for art and drawing practice, she's now reached a stage where she's taken that "terrifying but exciting plunge into freelance illustration."

Kirsty is inspired by Golden Age illustrators such as Arthur Rackham and comic book illustrators including Andy Brase and Jean-Baptiste Monge. "I'm also heavily influenced by folklore and nature, so that features a lot in my work."

**1 OOPS** "I really played with this chap's expression to convey just how dodderly his character is, and I wanted the colours to complement the humour and his cheerful nature. I've always wanted to live in a windmill, but I won't be bending down in front of the blades!"

**2 ATTICUS AND LUMP** "My first outing in Manga Studio proved an enjoyable experience! The inking pens are very organic and varied. This is for a personal project that I had great fun lighting and playing with the mood."

**3 TIPPLE IN THE WOODS** "I wanted a really earthy feel to this piece and chose earthy colours. I prefer using limited colour palettes. Once I designed the trees, the characters kind of just appeared as if they've always been lurking behind one of them!"

## SUBMIT YOUR ART TO FXPOSÉ

Send up to five pieces of your work, along with their titles, an explanation of your techniques, a photo of yourself and contact details. Images should be sent as 300DPI JPEG files.

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(maximum 1MB per image)

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All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.







#### IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Kirsty's insight into how the characters in her Tipple in the Woods piece came about made me smile. That's a great example of art magic mixing with inspiration. And the figures look so pleased to be there!"

Cliff Hope,  
Operations Editor



ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

# ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY

Jana Schirmer posted about her artistic frustrations on Facebook. She tells us that she now prefers painting more graphic-looking images, like this recent artwork.







## GETTING SCHOOLED

Canada's Syn Studio is offering an industry-standard concept art diploma, taught by top-name artists, including Remko Troost and Donglu Yu. **Page 25**



## SELF-STYLED ARTIST

Self-taught Chilean artist Genzoman shows you around his new self-designed studio, surrounded by figurines, art books and his very first drawing. **Page 26**



## FANTASTICAL BOOK NEWS

Concept design veteran Matt Gaser's first self-published book, *Fantastical*, collects a decade's worth of fantasy artwork from films and video games. **Page 29**

# Falling in love again

**Lost the spark?** Even pro artists get fed up with art now and again. **Julia Sagar** finds out how to turn it around when you hit a wall

**We've all been there: those dark days, weeks, months where it feels like you're forcing yourself to draw or paint. When the desire to create new artwork evaporates, leaving a residue of laboured, unrewarding pieces saved on your PC, and you staring at a blank canvas.**

The good news is that it happens to everyone. Whether you're a seasoned professional or just starting out as an artist, chances are you'll lose your way at some point – perhaps multiple times. So what happens if your art spark fades in 2016? How can you get back on track if the creative juices stop flowing?

Last year, freelance Berlin-based artist Jana Schirmer faced exactly this problem.



"The rare times I'm coming up with a personal illustration it feels like I'm forcing myself to paint," she wrote in a Facebook post that attracted

an outpouring of replies from established artists around the world. "I also dislike the style/stuff I'm doing right now," she continued. "Being an artist feels complicated for me, so I procrastinate a lot... I need to get back into finding the fun again."



"I needed to find the fun again," says Jana.

**“The way to find your message is to paint the things you're afraid others won't like or understand”**

If you feel as though you've lost your artistic voice, the key, says illustrator **Winona Nelson**, is to stop worrying about how or what to paint, and figure out why you paint. What do you want to say? It's an important



question, even if you're not struggling with motivation – and January is the perfect time to reflect on your motivations. Winona knew there was a problem when she realised her message had become, "Look what I can do!" instead of articulating a deeper truth. To tackle the issue, she took a step back and thought about what was truly important to her, not what would impress a client.

"The way to find your message is to paint the things you're afraid others won't like or understand, which in my case come from my dreams and my identity as a Native American and as a woman," she says, adding that it worked. "Those more personal pieces are the best received, despite those fears, and led to more sales and new clients than my more standard portfolio pieces or previous client work." ➔

First Fire: Guardian of the Eastern Door is based on a prophesy of Winona Nelson's tribe, the Ojibwe, that foretold the coming of the Pale People. (3bn).



## INDUSTRY INSIGHT

### JANA SCHIRMER

*The German artist on losing then regaining her mojo*

**You posted about your artistic frustrations on Facebook – has anything changed since?**

Things have got a lot better. I received overwhelming feedback from other artists, saying they sometimes go through the same problems. This support was awesome. It helped me relax and focus on fighting the problem.

**How did you manage to find your motivation again?**

The first thing was not to get too stressed about it. It's hard to accept sometimes that there will be times where you just need to rest, and it's totally okay! I'm listening to myself more and trying to see what direction I want to go. I'm having fun painting and drawing again. I'm very self-critical – sometimes it helps drive me forward, but in this case it'd stopped me in my tracks.

**What's the biggest lesson you've learned for the experience?**

I learned mostly that we're all human and can't function 100 per cent all the time. Giving yourself time to breathe and refuel is important. I'd get stressed when I saw all these artists posting amazing work on Facebook and I wasn't producing anything. But everyone has their ups and downs.

**What would you say to an artist who feels they're stagnating?**

Try to remember what got you drawing in the first place. There are no rules for art, so there shouldn't really be any reason to be stressed. Allow yourself to do whatever you want! Keep your eyes open for inspiration – outside the art world – for ideas that will make you excited to paint again. Maybe there's something only you will be able to express a certain way?



Jana's a full-time freelance illustrator who creates art for the video games industry. She also collects stickers.

[www.janaschi.deviantart.com](http://www.janaschi.deviantart.com)



She advises following your feelings, because your visual voice is secondary in importance when you're searching for a deeper truth. "Fear is a good place to start, because if there's something you're afraid to explore, it's the thing closest to your heart," she adds.

3D artist Victor Hugo understands the pressure of losing your voice. He recently suffered an entire year of paralysing creative block. The Brazilian artist works across everything from advertising to comics, books, games and more, but when he started to lose motivation, unfinished projects began piling up. "What happened to me was I started so many projects," he says, "but then I had a considerable number of letdowns and I began to feel that every project would be an unfinished one. At one point, I had 18 unfinished projects."



## STARTING OVER

It took a dramatic suggestion from his wife – to throw away everything that was holding him back, including his computer and unfinished work – to turn things around. "I did it! I mean, I didn't set my computer on fire or anything like that," he laughs, "but I deleted all my projects. I still remember the weight of the unnecessary responsibility coming off my shoulders. At that moment I realised that instead of doing 20 projects, it's way more productive if you focus on a single project and try to learn something from it."

"Sometimes you just need to let it go," adds concept artist and industrial designer Georg Löschner, aka PapaBear. "Your brain is a muscle and it needs time to turn things over subconsciously, so trust your gut feeling," he says. "If your body and mind have been screaming 'No! I can't art today,' take a break."



Victor Hugo created Spew in 3D and tweaked it in Photoshop to look like a painting.

Georg Löschner aka PapaBear merges mechanical, bionic and industrial influences into his artwork.

**“I deleted all my projects. I remember the weight of unnecessary responsibility coming off my shoulders”**

Continuously trying to push through by any means is definitely not the right way to avoid blocks or burnouts."

Georg experienced a "heavy blockade" during his industrial design studies, while making the transition back from digital sketching to using pen and paper again. "I sucked big time at the beginning, which robbed me instantly of all energy to pursue the matter," he says. "But learning to let go, and take fails or blocks into account is a

crucial aspect of our job. Either tackle the problem from a completely untrodden path, or push it aside and come back to it later."

Christian Alzmann, senior art director at Academy Award-winning motion picture visual effects company Industrial Light



& Magic, agrees. He recommends taking a break and doing something fun. "Try some studies or simple sketches. If you draw, try



To create this project, Victor followed a drawing tutorial by Loish – using 3D tools instead of traditional tools.







Witch, by Christian Alzmann, who says that creative block is "inevitable."

sculpting; if you sculpt, try painting. All of those skills will help you in the long run. Also, inspiration is everywhere: go to the zoo, bake a cake - shake it up. And engage with your community. Sharing stories, techniques and tricks is priceless."

## DEADLINE INSPIRATION

What if you don't have time on your side? What if you've got tight deadlines to meet and ambitious, talented artists just waiting to step into your place and shine?

"When I don't have time for a trip to the beach or a hike in Yosemite, I go to my art books and find inspiration from some of my favourite artists," says Christian. "When I return to what I'm working on, I try to find something about the image that looks like

it might be fun and concentrate on that. If I can make that small piece of the image work, I'll be inspired to bring the rest of the image up to support it."

Christian's best advice is to accept that creative block happens and stop putting pressure on yourself. "It's inevitable," he says, "but my biggest lesson is that the block inevitably passes, too."

Finding a process to help you deal with it and pull you out of a creative funk can make it all worth it, he argues. "Sometimes, in that funk, you find a renewed or slightly tweaked version of your art that helps push you in a new direction. When you're in the zone, try to remember those things that really inspire you and let them help you find the passion again." 🍷



In Georg's piece Nova Bionics, the hand has had a "tool upgrade".



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Esteemed concept artist Donglu Yu is on the Syn Studio teaching staff roster.

## A new concept for your career

**Syn-chronised study** Canada's premier school of concept art, Syn Studio, will now be offering an industry-standard concept art diploma, taught by top-name artists



Syn Studio was founded in 2007 by Anthony Walsh, who went in with the ethos that "great artists are not born, they are made." Fast forward nine years and the school has gone from strength to strength, now adding to the mix an 18-month, full-time concept art diploma programme that's led by leading industry professionals.

The concept art diploma is the first of its kind, and is designed to give students a solid foundation to become professional-level concept artists armed with the right skills, techniques and workflows.

"It was developed over the course of three years with help from top concept artists and educators, most notably Scott Robertson, who has personally trained some of the world's most successful concept artists," says Anthony. "Many people want to work as concept artists, so to beat the competition it's very important to train with

the right people," he adds. "To graduate with cutting-edge skills, you need training from professionals working in the industry right now. We don't hire full-time teachers and book their class schedules way in advance, because then they aren't working in the industry any more."

In the past year alone, the school has provided the platform for masterclasses

**“To graduate with cutting-edge skills, you need training from working professionals”**

Remko Troost, who created concepts for the Assassin's Creed franchise, passes on his industry knowledge.

taken by the likes of Remko Troost, Christian Robert de Massy, Donglu Yu and Jeong H Shin, among many more. These top tutors will act like the student's art directors, Anthony says. "They require the students to use the same pipelines and procedures, submit the same set of production-ready assets and hold them to the same standards



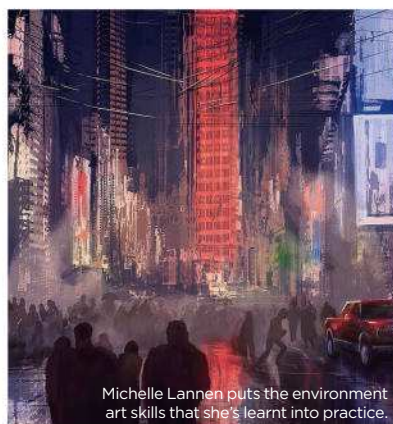
Student Michael Klukowski created this for Syn Studio's vehicle and mech design course.

of quality and professionalism as they do in the industry" and this includes the 2D and 3D workflows that are increasingly being used in the industry today.

To qualify for the diploma, Anthony advises that you need to demonstrate through your portfolio, letter of intent and interview that you can draw well using basic principles including proportion, perspective and anatomy, can use value to convincingly show form and cast realistic shadows, use colour and understand colour theory, are comfortable painting digitally in Photoshop and can create original concepts that show potential for interesting design.

Many of Syn Studio's previous students are now forging their way through the entertainment industry and living their dream, and with only 20 students per programme and 18 months of dedicated study time, its diploma offers a strong alternative to a three-year degree.

For more information and to apply, see [www.synstudio.ca/concept-art-diploma](http://www.synstudio.ca/concept-art-diploma).



Michelle Lannen puts the environment art skills that she's learnt into practice.





To the right of my shelves are art books by my favourite artists. To the left, books and comics I've worked on. Plus many comics and mangas I've collected over the years.

A medal from Playa Ancha University, because I graduated with the highest score of my year. It brings me a bunch of good memories.



## Genzoman

**Street fighter** The Chilean fantasy artist takes time out from his latest game artwork to talk self-designed studios and magical sofas



**This year I moved from Santiago to the place I was born, Arica, near the border with Peru and Bolivia. My house is really close to the beach and although this is my third studio, it's the first one that I really feel could be the definitive workspace. Not just because there's a lot of space, but also because it's the first studio I designed, so I feel really comfortable here.**

I usually work side-by-side with my wife, with each of us concentrating on our respective projects. But I'm the kind of guy

Music! I used to study piano and composition as a kid. I used to compose stuff and was in a band. I recorded some demos and uploaded them to my SoundCloud - you can check them out!

My couch is one of my favourite things ever. After a long day's work, I can just rest a bit, read books and feel like a kid again. After a couple of minutes I'm ready for battle. It has magical powers!

who's more creative by night, so the studio is conveniently closer to the living room and far from the bedrooms. The best thing about working from home is that I don't need to leave my house to have a workstation. I can see my two kids grow up and I'm always close to the people I love. My work never feels lonely because I have someone to give me opinions, help and support.

My usual working day begins at 9am. I have some toast and coffee or tea, and I'm ready to tackle some sketches for different projects. Right now I'm working on some covers for Street Fighter Unlimited and a

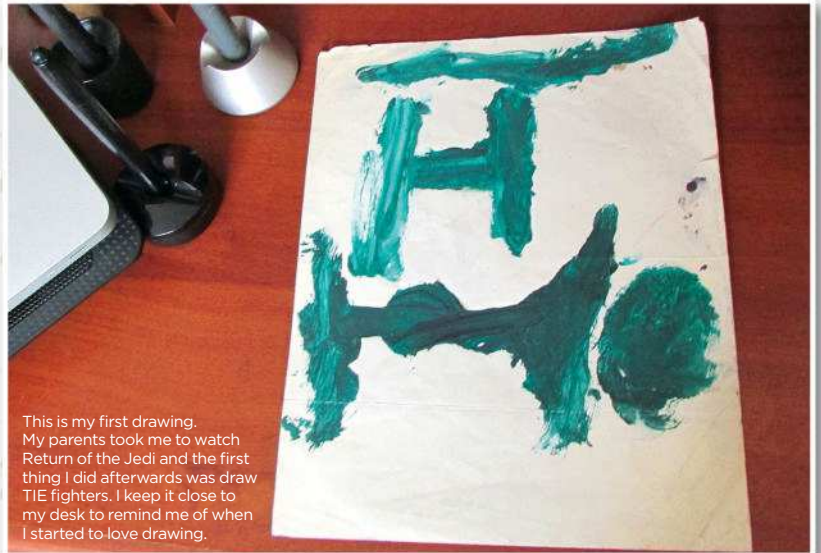
game by Alderac Games. After a break for lunch, I walk a bit or go downtown for materials. I come back and keep working on the line art, creating the approved sketches all afternoon until my kids arrive. I usually play with them and then start painting at night when everything is calm, so I can listen to music or put a movie on in the background to watch while I'm working.

**Gonzalo Ordóñez, aka Genzoman, is a Chilean freelance artist who loves to illustrate games-related art and mythology, and is preparing to launch his Patreon soon. See his art work at [www.genzoman.deviantart.com](http://www.genzoman.deviantart.com).**



# Artist news, software & events

My tools of work. I use a Cintiq 22HD, but also have an Intuos Pro and a little Bamboo on the desk, which I usually carry on my travels for painting on flights, trains or buses.



This is my first drawing. My parents took me to watch Return of the Jedi and the first thing I did afterwards was draw TIE fighters. I keep it close to my desk to remind me of when I started to love drawing.



I love figures and toys! Here are some from my favourite series. Most of my collection are on my shelf, but there are other figures all over the room.



I always carry a note book and this image is from The Crow author James O'Barr - we met in Peru for coffee before a convention.



A framed drawing by Mushishi director Hiroshi Nagahama who I met at Polymanga 2013. He was really nice and sent me this drawing of Ginko, the main character of Mushishi.



My favourite books: Arte/Rama is an art encyclopedia given to me by my parents when I was a kid, while the Last Unicorn defined my childhood.



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**Hatboy**

by Vaughn Pinpin



## The book of brave new worlds

**Pure imagination** Concept design veteran Matt Gaser's first self-published book collects together a decade's worth of fantasy artwork



**Matt Gaser has built his career on designing fictional worlds for films and video games.**

**For his first art book, Fantastical, Matt is inviting readers to explore his own fantasy universe.**

The artist, who's worked on big projects like the Star Wars: The Clone Wars and the Angry Birds film, says that, "For the past three years I've been selling prints of my artwork at comic conventions. All the time people kept asking me when I'm doing my own book," he says. "That's when I decided to self-publish Fantastical."

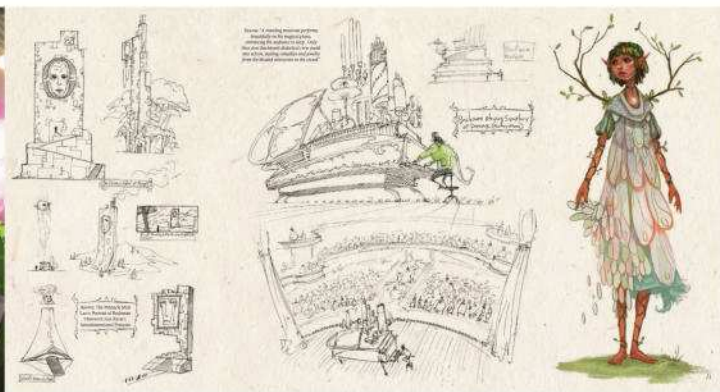
Matt called on the help of his friends: book designer and art director Iain Morris, and co-owner of Cameron Books, Chris Gruener. Together they settled on a hardcover format wrapped in a dust jacket, filled with 112 full-colour pages.

While Fantastical includes Matt's finished Photoshop work, two-thirds of the book are devoted to concept sketches and pitch ideas. "If you want to make the best art, you have to be open to change," the artist says.

Fantastical is available now, and can be ordered through Matt's website. Find out more at [www.mattgaser.com](http://www.mattgaser.com).



Matt says he enjoys sketching, because it leads to the exploration of spontaneous ideas.



Matt would love to publish more books in the future, alongside his animation and film work.



Choosing which images and projects made the final book was a tough challenge for the artist.



# Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact Acting Editor, Beren Neale, on [beren@imaginefx.com](mailto:beren@imaginefx.com) or write to ImagineFX, Future Plc, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK



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## Walking a fine line

Great 10th anniversary edition, guys. I thought you trod a fine line between celebrating some of the best artists you've brought us over the years, without travelling too far up your own buttholes. I've seen some magazines spend their birthday issues slapping themselves on the back so much, it's embarrassing. But you managed to mark the occasion while still bringing us amazing art and brilliant interviews. Congrats on surviving this long in a world where a lot of supposedly bigger mags, like FHM, have gone out of business. Please keep up the good work for another decade at least, as I don't know what I would do without you.

One gripe, though. In your roundup of cheap alternatives to Photoshop Elements you didn't mention Affinity Photo. It's only £40 and it does just about everything Elements does, and some things better. I'd urge anybody to check it out.

**Mary Davis, via email**

**Beren replies** Hey Mary! Haha, many thanks for the compliment. We all worked hard on the 10-year anniversary issue, and hopefully produced something worthy of such a big celebration. I love the process of planning an issue, selecting the artists that we'd like to work with, the topics we cover and all that other jazz. Ultimately it's all about them, and you, the readers, so hearing this is mighty fine indeed!

As for Affinity Photo – thanks for the heads up. We reviewed it back in February 2015. We will commission a workshop for it, but the trick there is finding an artist who uses the software. The search is on!



**DID YOU MISS OUR 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL ISSUE?**

Turn to page 56 to see how you can get hold of this and other back issues, too!

Reader Mary Davis believes Affinity Photo is a decent Photoshop Elements alternative.



Both our covers for the indie comics and the black and white issues floated Emily Bullchong's boat.

## Cover compliments

Been loving your covers recently. I subscribe from Sydney so I'm a bit behind, but the Tank Girl issue cover was insane! Loved it. My nephew (15) spotted it and now he's a convert too. However, my favourite cover this year was the Beauty of Black and White issue – simply stunning. Will you be doing anything like this again?

**Emily Bullchong, via email**

**Beren replies** Hello Emily. I love the Tank Girl comic, and it was a blast to work with official artist Brett Parson. And THANK YOU for giving love for the black and white cover. We hadn't done anything like that before, but we definitely will again. We usually go for eye-catching colour to sell the cover image, but subtle use of black and white and gold can work just as well. And it helps when you're working with the wonderful Charlie Bowater!

## A career in art

First off I just want to say happy anniversary to ImagineFX, I love all the work you do and look forward to the next 10 years of digital art goodness! However, I'm interested to know if you plan on running articles focusing on career advice. It's all very well learning creative techniques, but I don't know how to get my work out there and get my foot on the career ladder, so to speak.

**Barry Churn, via email**

**Beren replies** Hey Bazzar! (May I call you that? No?! OK then...) This is a topic that's always relevant and something that I've thought long about. It's timely too, what with Syn Studio having just launched its industry-standard concept art diploma (see page 25). Short answer: I want to do an annual overview on education in this industry, making it up to date, offering information on the best online and bricks-and-mortar schools around the world. It's something we haven't done due to budget, and the sheer scope of putting it together, but watch this space.



Your art news that's grabbed our attention



**Alexander Johanson**  
[@AJohanson89](https://twitter.com/AJohanson89)

"My latest creature illustration – been painting fur, learning with Schoolism."



**Moon Ink**  
[@mooninkz](https://twitter.com/mooninkz)

"Hello guys, thank you for the great content you give us. Here is a study I did recently."



**Rowena Aitken**  
[@rowenaaitken](https://twitter.com/rowenaaitken)

"Hey @imaginefx you featured me in issue 87, I'm revisiting the Fantasy Alphabet :)"



Just finished something you want us to shout about? Send it our way on Twitter (@imaginefx), or find us on Facebook!



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# Artist Q&A

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**The**  
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panel

**Leesha Hannigan**  
Leesha is an Australian illustrator and concept artist. Her interests lie in fantasy illustration, with a personal focus on creature and environment art.  
[www.leeshahannigan.com](http://www.leeshahannigan.com)

**John Petersen**  
John is a production artist and animator for Engineering Systems, Inc. He's also an illustrator whose clients include Monte Cook Games and Catalyst Game Labs.  
[www.petersenart.com](http://www.petersenart.com)

**Marcel van Vuuren**  
Marcel has been working as a concept designer for over two years, mainly favouring subject matters such as sci-fi vehicles, environments and prop design.  
<http://ifxm.ag/marcel-vv>

**Sara Forlenza**  
Sara creates art for book covers, cards and RPGs. After many years using traditional media, she was introduced to the world of digital art. It was love at first sight.  
[www.saraforlenza.deviantart.com](http://www.saraforlenza.deviantart.com)

**Tom Foster**  
Tom is a professional comic book artist, best known for his work on 2000 AD and the Judge Dredd magazine. Outside of work, he likes to do stand-up comedy gigs.  
[www.tomfoster.deviantart.com](http://www.tomfoster.deviantart.com)

## Artist Q&A Need our advice?

Email [help@imaginefx.com](mailto:help@imaginefx.com) with your art questions and we'll provide all the answers!

### Question

I want to go against fantasy archetypes. What approach would you recommend?

*Mairead Kersley, Northern Ireland*

There are many ways to get creative with your subversions. I avoid the predictable evil 'black' unicorn and instead choose a muted, rusty colour scheme for my beast.



### Answer Leesha replies

Subverting tropes and expectations for a fantasy creature or character is a great way to create an interesting depiction of your subject. While there's something reassuring and familiar about tropes in any context, it's somewhat more difficult to design a subject in a creative way, when that subject has been designed a million times before.

Fantasy as a genre has an extensive list of tropes! All you have to do to subvert them is sit down and think about opposites. For this article, my approach is



Use a Color Dodge layer to paint highlights with a gritty, textured brush. Be sure to first double-click the layer and then deselect Transparency Shapes Layer. Can you see the difference?

to write out a fantasy bestiary, and categorise them into good, evil and neutral. After that it becomes pretty easy to choose which subject you want to depict against type.

Colour and lighting can strongly support your narrative as well as the tone of your piece. Want to paint a typically evil creature as friendly or cute? Use bright, saturated colours. Warm lighting and cool shadows works well for this. Looking for ways to make a good character look evil or foreboding? Try featuring some desaturated colours and gritty textures.



## Step-by-step: Paint outside the fantasy box



**1** I block in some of my evil unicorn's form in a rough sketch. Typically, unicorns are shown as standing around looking pretty and serene, so I give my subject a more dynamic, charging pose. Reference will always help you out when deciding upon a pose or gesture. I tend to use Flickr and Pinterest, or I shoot my own.



**2** I pay attention to the setting, which is key because it gives context to the subject. I want it to be an isolated, cold environment, which is different to the cosy woods where a unicorn may usually hang out. A sweeping snowscape would complement the tone of the piece, along with some ominous-looking storm clouds.



**3** When detailing your subject, think about your choices when it comes to iconic or recognisable elements of its design. For this unicorn's horn, I look up some reference for different types of animal horns, and chose one that's less streamlined, jagged, and perhaps a little more fit for impaling a gnome or two.

## Question

Can a garish colour scheme make for a more effective painting?

LaVerne Harleson, US



## Answer John replies



The key thing to consider, no matter what palette you're using, is colour harmony. Do the colours play well together? Are they all competing for the viewer's attention? Another important factor is what kind of mood is are you trying to set for your audience?

What makes for an effective painting is how all the parts come together as a whole. Colour, value, shape language, composition and rhythm all work together to craft a compelling image. If you're relying on a bombastic colour scheme to save your painting, you may have other issues that need to be addressed.

For this article I paint over a greyscale drawing several times, because the light sources change in each image. My two favourite Photoshop colour tools for doing this are Color Balance and Levels adjustment layers. In a Levels adjustment, you can tweak the red, green, and blue channels individually. Gradient

Overlay is also a wonderful adjustment layer to quickly assign one colour to light values and another colour to dark.

The problems with using bright, saturated colours usually arise when you overuse them. But it really depends on the painting and what you're trying to convey. But if you can pull it off, a "garish" palette isn't garish at all.

## Artist's secret

### SWITCH COLOURS QUICKLY

When I'm having trouble selecting a colour palette I sometimes let the computer help me decide. There are several online apps to help you. [color.adobe.com](http://color.adobe.com) and [colourlovers.com](http://colourlovers.com) feature great web interface tools that enable you to construct a colour scheme on the fly.



## Question

### How should I depict reflected light from worn metal surfaces?

Chaz Dupont, Canada



## Answer

Marcel replies



Metal has a reflective component that can appear shiny or matt. When rendering out metallic objects, balance both of these effects to achieve realistic results. The key difference between a shiny, new metal and a metal that's been worn is that when light reflects against worn metal, it'll diffuse that light. A polished surface will reflect light on its surroundings further, whereas a worn metal's matt bumps and scratches will scatter the light beams, resulting in a softer illumination.

You'll likely need to tackle lighting challenges in any scene where you have a variety of metal surfaces, and understanding the relationship between your light sources and your material is crucial. You can study how light behaves around you, but in a concept environment you don't always have access to real-life examples. You can speed things up by using 3D software to generate accurate lighting information, ensuring a strong foundation for your painting. I like to mock up my subject in a 3D software package such as Modo, and use it to assist in the setup of light sources and material properties.



A technician works on the reconstruction of an old, broken-down military drone. I chose a simple lighting scheme to support the overall ramshackle mood.



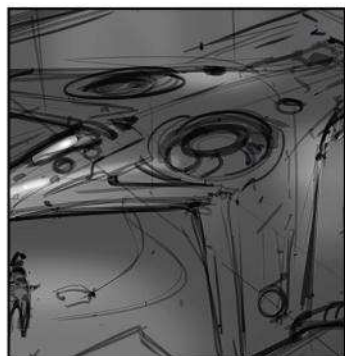
This area contains several sources of minor light reflecting on multiple surfaces. The importance here is creating a natural distinction between all of them.

## Artist's secret

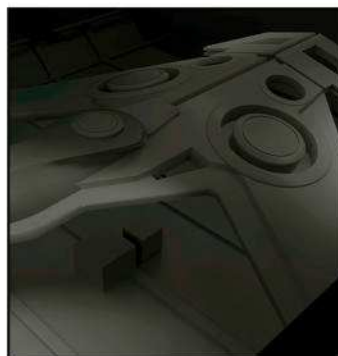
### BOOST YOUR MATERIAL LIGHTING

You can use the Lasso tool to grab reflections on metal references, and use Photoshop's Transfer modes like Screen or Dodge to place them over your metals. This can save time and make your reflections feel more realistic.

## Step-by-step: Rendering metal and light



**1** A quick sketch stage helps me to determine the subject matter and narrative angle. I like to do these as line art, which gives me more control over the lighting that will match the mood and tone of the piece. The next step is to add basic black and white values beneath my line art, and this enables me to determine the most suitable light sources for the final image.



**2** I develop and design the subject; using Modo enables me to quickly build a low-poly model, and set up accurate light and surface properties. I now have enough information to paint my image, and I use Photoshop to edit the lighting and basic colour scheme. I always keep a copy of this 'light model' on a separate layer, and refer back to it throughout the process.



**3** I use 3D-Coat to generate several texture and material passes, until I settle on the worn surface. As you work on texturing, you'll lose the lighting information previously set up, and this is why referring back to the light model layer you created ensures you stay true to your intended composition. Once your textures are in place, you need to reapply your lighting scheme.



**4** During the final stages you'll blend and integrate all the elements. Metallic surfaces will pick up light sources from across your scene: ask yourself where the light will bounce to once it's reflected by your metal components. It's easy to add too much shine everywhere, which can result in overly exposed surfaces. Be sure to only add highlights where they're needed.





No matter how technologically advanced a society becomes, if a place is abandoned it doesn't take very long for nature to reclaim everything and take over.

## Question

Please help me quickly paint an abandoned futuristic city

Rodney Beavis, US

## Answer

John replies



This involves creating a combination of futuristic, advanced technology with modernist architecture and corrosion, decay, vegetation

overgrowth, blight, and crumbling or collapsed structures. You have to ask yourself, why was the city abandoned? Was it from war? Disease? Alien invasion? Depending on the circumstances, you'll have to think about leaving evidence

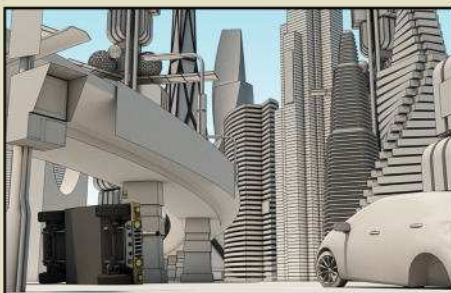
behind of the sudden abandonment. Consider adding bullet holes, overturned vehicles, emergency evacuation signs and other indicators.

My process involves creating a 3D model of the major structures to use as a reference. Modern and futurist architecture contains wavy lines and curves intermingled with straight-line grids, and this workflow saves me a lot of time trying to achieve an accurate perspective by drawing

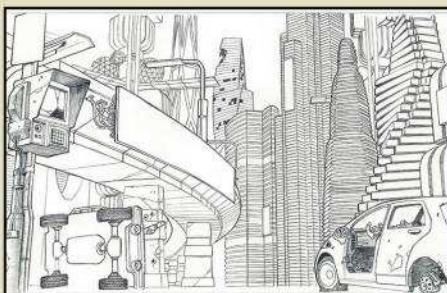
countless vanishing points on my own. I can also move the camera to try different perspectives to quickly find the composition I like.

Then I render an image from that angle, draw over the image, and then paint in the details. I also take the time to make lasso selections to separate background elements from the foreground so I can adjust colour and tone for each area separately.

## Step-by-step: Build a digital maquette



**1** I start by constructing a 3D model of my city. I create basic shapes, and either copy or extrude them into stacked arrays. This gives me skyscraper-like structures with separations for each floor. Then I can twist, bend, stretch and scale each one to give me that futurist look.



**2** I project the 3D rendered image and trace it on to drawing paper. You can also just start painting digitally over the 3D model, but I like having a bit of a line art style to my work. I add destruction and broken windows to the buildings, but much of this will be painted over.



**3** I begin adding colour and value to the piece, using Color Balance adjustment layers to unify the mood if the colours start to get all over the place. I want a sunlit scene, with the light coming in from the back left. Atmospheric perspective is also useful for showing distance and scale.





## Question

How can I make dynamic page layouts easy to follow?

Nathan Shannon, Canada



An increasingly varied page layout can help escalate tension and drama in a scene, but the action should still be clearly delineated.

## Answer

Tom replies



Page layouts have a lot of influence over how a reader follows a story, so making them seem natural and easy to follow is vital. For this article, I've laid out a page detailing an escalating conflict. In the first two panels, there's only mild conflict and so I've used straightforward angles and panel placement. But as things become more heated, I begin to drop or break panel borders, stagger panel placement and incorporate more dynamic angles and perspective. I use DAZ 3D to plan my panel compositions; manipulating the camera placement and focal length can create some dramatic effects that would be difficult to achieve using traditional methods.

Then I use Photoshop to organise my DAZ renders. All the major compositional elements in each panel are placed to subconsciously guide the reader from one panel to the next in sequence. The figures in panel three are shot from such an angle as to create an invisible, diagonal line that leads from the upper figure, through the lower figure, through the left fist of the character in panel four, right to the focal point of panel four: the face of the charging character. I then guide the reader through the focal points of the following two panels in a similar way, using one, continuous, zig-zagging line of action. This way the action can be dynamically staged, yet be clear and intuitive for the reader.



A strong thumbnail with a clear line of action can be invaluable in anchoring the core elements of a page.



## Artist's secret

### LEADING THE EYE

Drawing an imaginary, or even literal, line through your layout to represent the path of the reader's eye across the page can be a great help in pulling all your major storytelling elements together, so that they flow smoothly.

## Question

My comic characters' faces lack variety – can you help?

Abi Thorne, England



Emphasising different, key aspects of the face can create a variety of convincing characters, so long as the fundamentals of form and anatomy are maintained.

## Answer

Tom replies



When drawing unusual or particularly characterful facial types, I find it important to have a strong understanding of the underlying anatomy, as my ability to convincingly exaggerate elements of this will govern the legitimacy of my characters. So I have reference material, such as anatomical diagrams on hand to cover any of the gaps in my knowledge.

I look up images of celebrities whose faces seem to match the character type I'm aiming for most closely, and study the dominant shapes in their faces. However, I try not to base my design too closely on

one person, as a noticeable resemblance to a familiar figure may bring the reader out of the fiction of the story and compromise the character's own unique identity. So I draw from elements of different sources, because noticing the commonalities and the differences in my chosen models helps me understand what the core elements that define the character are.

By building up enough knowledge of the foundations of facial geography, I can choose precisely which elements to keep generic and which to make distinct, to better define only the things about the character that I wish to communicate.







## Question

### Help me design and portray banners flapping in the wind

Carol-Lynn Fosberry, US

## Answer

Sara replies



Looking at flags and war banners, the first thing you'll notice is that they usually have a simple design,

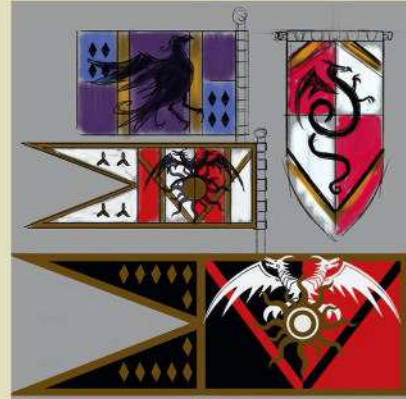
in order to be recognisable from a distance. Typically they'll feature the coat of arms of a feuding family, geometric designs and bright colours.

I lay down some rough sketches of the banner I want to paint, and then paint my chosen design. I add colour to the various flag elements, which are placed on separate layers, enabling me to move and alter them with ease. Once I'm happy I save my basic flag design.

Now I open a new file and I sketch the scene that will feature the flag flying in the wind. I import the basic flag and create a motion effect with Photoshop's Transform>Warp tool. I can also use the Liquify tool to fold and warp the flag design and add more folds. To boost the fluttering effect, I use the Puppet Warp tool: this enables me to give movement to the flag by rotating or pulling specific areas around specific points.

Now it's time to render the flag in the environment. I create a Multiply layer and I lay down shadows, choosing a cool colour and a Soft brush to simulate the softness of the fabric. I pay attention to where the flag meets the wooden pole: here, there are a lot of folds. Finally, I add some highlights on a new Color Dodge layer.

To give a more realistic sense of a flag blowing in the wind I blur part of it with the Motion Blur tool.



Sketching out and deciding on flag designs beforehand helps to save time during the actual painting process.

## Artist's secret



**DEALING WITH FOLDS**  
Where the flag produces a very big fold in on itself that divides the flag into two, split the layout into two and adjust the look of the flag with the Transform>Warp tool.

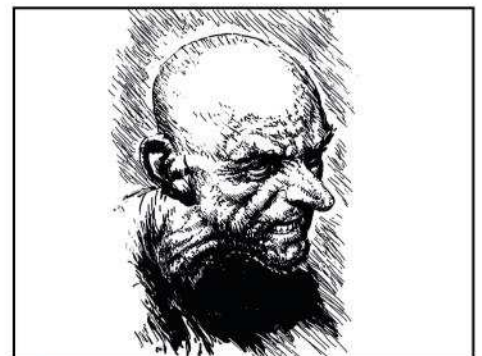
## Step-by-step: Develop distinct facial types



**1** When drawing a young, healthy character, knowledge of the basics of proportion are essential. I hint a little at the underlying muscle and bone structure, but primarily aim to achieve balance and subtlety. Too much of any one specific characteristic can be jarring for the viewer.



**2** A fuller face can be a challenge because the bone structure and musculature are obscured by fatty masses, so anatomical diagrams may fall short. I use a fair bit of photo reference here to study how the fat around the jaw and cheeks alter the basic forms of the face.



**3** For a wizened or gaunt face I exaggerate the bone and muscle structures, making use of anatomy diagrams as reference material. If I want to age the figure, looser skin around the jaw and neck and bags under the eyes help to lend authenticity to more obvious wrinkles.



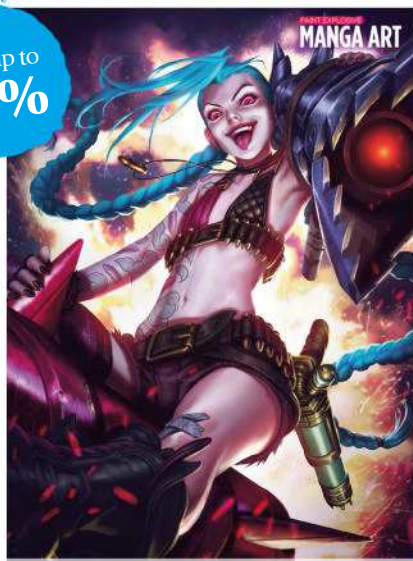
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## Question

### How can I portray mixed emotions within a group of people?

Jon Douglas, England

## Answer

Sara replies

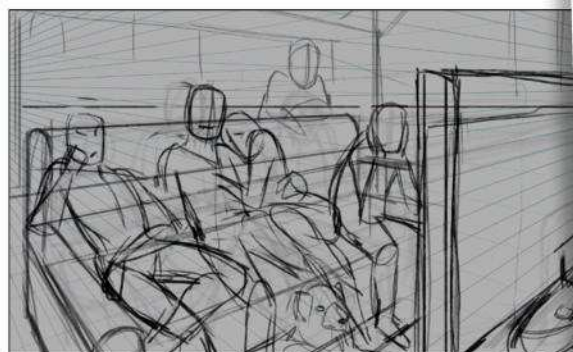


To answer this question I decide to draw a group of friends, who are gathered on a couch in front of a television to watch a horror film. The viewer won't actually see what's on the screen, and so this means that I can concentrate on developing the characters' different facial expressions, and not worry about what they're actually watching.

I start by sketching mixed figure poses sitting on the couch. For the moment, I don't place too much attention on the anatomy and instead focus on the naturalness of their poses. When I'm relaxing at home my back is rarely straight, and my legs and arms are never folded – so why should my collection of characters be any different?

I place the television on the right because I anticipate that the painting will be seen from left to right, so that the viewer has plenty of time to take in the faces of the various characters.

Once I'm satisfied with their poses, I produce the final sketch and add various details to the environment: popcorn, a cat and a dog. I choose a night-time setting, because it fits well with the horror film choice. Furthermore, the dark colours contrast nicely with the light that's coming from the television, and this will help me focus attention on the characters. I don't go into too much detail in the background because this could prove a distraction. Instead, I focus on their faces and paint their expressions.



Here's a rough sketch showing only the posture and anatomy of my figures, which helps me see if the image is balanced.

## Artist's secret

LIGHT FROM A TELEVISION



To create the correct lighting setup in front of the television set I use a cool spot light that originates from the screen. This casts very dark and contrasting shadows across the entire environment.

## Step-by-step: Different expression for different characters

**1** I paint the bored-looking character and I focus on her posture, which will communicate her state of mind. The character is holding her head with one hand. Her eyes must indicate disinterest, so I draw them half-closed and tight. A mouth with drooping corners is essential to show that whatever she's watching is not floating her boat.



**2** For the couple, I paint him sitting with his legs wide apart and calm facial expression. I paint his eyes open and mouth relaxed into a smile. But she's frightened and so I paint her huddled with her knees toward her chest and an arm holding on to his top. Her gaze must indicate anxiety, so I depict her hiding her head between her shoulders.



**3** Now I paint two characters who are interested in the film. The man is concentrating on the plot so I paint a neutral expression on his face but draw his torso bent toward the screen, as if he wants to see things more clearly. The woman is amused by the film so I paint her with a big smile, round out the cheeks and widen her eyes.



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# ANIME NOW!

How is Japanese animation holding up in 2016?  
**Andrew Osmond** surveys the field and finds aging superheroes, hungry giants and Ping Pong champs

**A**round a quarter century has passed since Neo-Tokyo exploded in Akira. That's when Japanese animation became a thing around the world, in that people became aware of it beyond a handful of fans. Many of you reading this will have grown up in that interval, getting into anime through Dragon Ball Z, Naruto, Death Note or Ghibli. In the same period, anime has evolved with new trends, styles and hits – although it's dubious to talk of hits in such a niche market.

Because anime *is* niche, and has become even more so in the fragmented mediaverse of the 2010s. Most anime labelled "anime" abroad weren't made for Japanese cinemas or prime-time viewing. They were made for

graveyard TV slots in the small hours, getting about 0.4 per cent of Japan's TV audience. Even Naruto, which plays at 7.30 in the evening in Japan, would struggle to get five per cent of TV viewers.

The only true anime blockbusters are some of Hayao Miyazaki's films released by Studio Ghibli. Spirited Away was Japan's top cinema release ever (domestic or foreign) for more than a decade after it opened in 2001. But Hayao has retired, at least from feature films. The same seems true of Ghibli itself, though Britain will presumably get the studio's last non-Miyazaki film, When Marnie Was There, based on a British kids' ghost story. In Japan, Spirited Away was supplanted as the top release by Disney's Frozen. ➡





## GIANT KILLERS

The heroes of Attack on Titan fight man-eating giants using Vertical Manoeuvring Equipment, which enables them to swing into action like Spider-Man.





#### DARK MAGIC

*Puella Magi Madoka Magica begins like a children's cartoon about magic girls, but it becomes far darker and madder.*



#### ANIME JOKER

*Here's the villain of Catchaman Crowds. He's a version of the Zoltar baddie from Battle of the Planets.*



#### TRON LEGACY

*Knights of Sidonia was made by the CG studio Polygon Pictures, which also worked on the TV cartoon Tron: Uprising.*

“It’s being scared of not understanding what other people are thinking”

darker, crazier and more heart-rending until its cosmic finale makes 2001: A Space Odyssey look small.

“I was asked to write a bloody story where magic girls appear...” Madoka’s writer Gen Urobuchi told the newspaper Asahi Shimbun. Actually, there’s little



blood in Madoka, just anguish and torment, though Gen later wrote the anime Psycho-Pass, in which a hi-tech world is drenched in splatter-killings of the kind you’d see in Hannibal. But Madoka owes its visuals not to Gen but to Gekidan INU Curry (literally “Theatrical Company Dog Curry”), which is the pseudonym for two maverick animators responsible for the girls’ extraordinary enemies.

In imagining these otherworldly demons, the artists went outside mainstream anime. Their limited, abstract, handmade cartooning has touches of art animators like Czech surrealist Jan

Yet while anime is marginal, it’s not fading out. There’s a huge number of new titles released every year – largely TV shows, often running 12 or 13 episodes. Many are rooted in the genres that were popular in anime 20 or 30 years ago. There are sci-fi and fantasy titles, often with big robots or magic girls; school comedies and rom-coms; and lurid horror. Other anime genres, like sports shows, are skipped by markets like Britain; a recent example is Yowamushi Pedal, about bicycle racing.

#### LOOK BEYOND THE CLICHÉS

You can get annoyed with anime for the same reason you can get fed up with superhero comics, because of their endless recycling of motifs and clichés,

#### ANIME TIMELINE

**The world first became aware of anime with Akira, but its history in Japan goes back much further...**

##### C. 1917

*The earliest Japanese cartoons made by pioneering film-makers. For more on the origins of Japanese animation, track down Anime: A History by Jonathan Clements.*

both story and visual, and their reluctance to step outside them. In terms of choosing subjects, anime often seems less bold than, say, Pixar or indie toons like Persepolis or The Illusionist. And yet, there are still remarkably bold anime.

Take Puella Magi Madoka Magica (don’t be deterred by its indigestible name). It looks like a cutesy Sailor Moon kids’ series with some unusually trippy artwork, about girls given magic powers by a catlike creature with a wide smile. And then it becomes a cross between Cabin in the Woods, Yellow Submarine and Faust, going

##### 1945

*The first full-length Japanese animation is Momotaro’s Divine Sea Warriors. A propaganda film, it shows Japan liberating Asia, and was released shortly before Japan’s surrender in World War II.*





## YEAR ZERO

The anime version of *Attack on Titan* modelled its old-fashioned stone cities on architecture in Germany.



## MONSTROUS OTHER

According to *Attack on Titan*'s producer, the Titans are frightening because we can't understand their expressions.

Svankmajer. One savage battle, played out in black silhouettes, feels like an homage – though a violent one – to the female animation pioneer Lotte Reiniger. “We both had set our eyes on Russian and Czech animation styles,” explain the duo. “Rather than working with a lot of people like in an orchestra, we prefer to create miniature landscapes that can be accomplished by working individually.”

Madoka Magica is disturbing, but the dominant anime horror is *Attack on Titan*, effectively a zombie holocaust apocalypse drama. The twist is these zombies are Godzilla-sized giants, besieging the last



humans in a stone city. Producer George Wada argues that Titan taps the fear of the Other. “It’s being scared of not understanding what other people are thinking. The Titans look like they’re smiling, or sad, but the fear comes from not understanding what those expressions mean.”

Titan is a grisly, morbid blend of Romero, Lovecraft and Akira. Unlike *Madoka Magica*, it was based on an already successful manga (comic) series by the young artist Hajime Isayama. “We have been very faithful to the ➡

## 1963

*Astro Boy*, which featured a Pinocchio-like robot boy, is one of the first Japanese TV cartoons. Both the cartoon and the original comic were created by Osamu Tezuka, the so-called God of Manga.

## GIRL DETECTIVES

*The Case of Hana and Alice* is about two kooky amateur detectives, who have previously been introduced in a live-action film.



## ANIMATED LIVE-ACTION

Some new anime has gone back to one of the oldest animation techniques: rotoscoping

One of the more unexpected trends in recent Japanese animation is for some titles to use old-fashioned rotoscoping, where live-action film is painted over to create non-cartoony animation. (An American example is Ralph Bakshi’s animated *Lord of the Rings* from 1978.) The TV serial *Flowers of Evil* uses rotoscoping to moody, menacing effect, telling a story of teen bullying and obsession in a small town. The feature film *The Case of Hana and Alice* is far more benign, a kooky comedy-drama in which two teen girls investigate a rumoured murder. It’s a prequel to a live-action film from a decade earlier, simply called *Hana and Alice*.



## POISONED FLOWERS

*Flowers of Evil* takes its title from the French poetry of Charles Baudelaire.



## GLASSES GIRL

Subverting convention again, this benign-looking *Madoka Magica* character is actually one of the scariest in the series!





#### PEPSI PINUP

*Tiger & Bunny envisions fully corporatised superheroes – the heroine Blue Rose stars in adverts for Pepsi Next.*

“We felt that nobody outside of Masakazu Katsura could come up with such a range of awesome hero designs”



#### BEAST BOY

*The horror series Tokyo Ghoul involves an ordinary boy who's transformed into a flesh-eating monster.*

➡ manga, but the anime looks different; there's a difference in the expression of the manga and the anime,” George says. For example, the human city looks more European in the anime; the staff studied material from Germany.

#### EMBARRASSED BY GIANT ZOMBIES



On the manga side, Hajime is diffident about his work, saying he was “really embarrassed” about weaknesses in his strip

– especially the first volume, “when I see my drawing and I can't follow the storyline.” He even suggests that the Titan anime should be considered the definitive version of his story.

The first Titan anime was made a couple of years ago,

with a continuation due in 2016. A two-part live-action film was made in Japan, but was widely panned; there's also a silly spoof anime series, Attack on Titan: Junior High. Other horror titles have risen in the meantime, including Parasyte – The Maxim, Tokyo Ghoul and (recently in Japan) Ajin. All three revolve around young protagonists who get turned into inhuman creatures and thrown into ambiguous wars where humans may be the monsters.

Away from horror, the cheerier Tiger & Bunny is a superhero comedy-drama, set in a metropolis where caped crusading is corporatised. The heroes fight evil on live TV, competing for audience shares, in suits covered with company logos. The show's best idea is to focus on a fading hero (Tiger), a middle-aged widower who's

#### 1968

*Star of the Giants, about a baseball player, is the first sports anime series. The genre has been popular with audiences ever since, with episodes about everything from boxing to basketball.*



#### ODD COUPLE

*The title characters of Tiger & Bunny – surprisingly, the bearded, middle-aged Tiger was the more popular.*



unwillingly paired with a photogenic youth (Bunny). Tiger has a beard, which was risky in Japan; as producer Masayuki Ozaki explained, “Japanese women do not feel attracted to men with facial hair.” But it worked – Tiger was a hit with female viewers.

The heroes were designed by a famed manga artist, Masakazu Katsura, whose strips include Video Girl Ai and I's, both centred around pretty girls. But executive producer Masayuki told the magazine Weekly Shonen Jump that Katsura was a superhero fan. “We felt that nobody outside of Katsura could come up with such a wide range of awesome hero designs... To him, this project was a surprise because most ➡



# AFTER MIYAZAKI

Hayao Miyazaki has retired, Ghibli seems to be ending... can anything take their place and match their successes? We examine the evidence.

For some pundits, the question, "Who is the next Miyazaki?" is as wearisome as, "Why do anime characters have big eyes?" Anime expert Jonathan Clements, author of the indispensable *Anime: A History*, argues that Hayao Miyazaki was simply unique, as was his artier mentor Isao Takahata (*Princess Kaguya*) and the Ghibli studio they co-founded.

But if you're looking not necessarily for the next Hayao Miyazaki, but just for anime with a similarly popular touch – accessible to mainstream, international viewers, with a sense of poetry and wonder – then there are candidates. In recent years, there have been some excellent anime movies that feel Ghibli-esque without being imitations. Two cases are *Patema Inverted*, in which a girl discovers an upside-down world where she's in constant danger of plunging into the sky; and *Giovanni's Island*, a fantasy-tinged history drama about two boys on an island occupied by Russia in the 1940s.

But the big directors often compared to Hayao are Makoto Shinkai and Mamoru Hosoda. Makoto first came to attention with a short film, *Voices of a Distant Star*, which he made practically solo. He's since developed sumptuous feature films, such as *5 Centimeters per Second*, which are often themed around love-struck teenagers. His 2011 *Journey to Agartha* looked great, but failed to build a world as compelling as Hayao's. Far better was 2013's *Garden of Words*, a 46-minute intimate drama about a boy and a woman meeting in a Tokyo park in Japan's rainy season.

## MAKING USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS



The rain is a key element of *Garden of Words*. "The droplets of rain in the air are particle simulations," Makoto explains, "and the rain splashing in puddles and in lakes, the ripples, the spray, that's hand drawn." Rain was an important part of Ghibli films such as *Totoro* and *Kiki's Delivery Service*. "I was impressed by their use of rain, but they were made in the days of analog... I wanted to see if I could make the rain in *Garden of Words* look as impressive, using the computer."

However, it's Mamoru Hosoda who's the hot anime name at the moment. Notoriously, he was hired by Ghibli to make *Howl's Moving Castle*, only for his version to be rejected. Since then he's made his name through his own outstanding feature films, with winning characters and strong themes: *The Girl who Leapt Through Time*, *Summer Wars* and *The Wolf Children*. Mamoru's latest film in Japan is *The Boy and the Beast*, which has elements of *Spirited Away* and *The Karate Kid*. A boy finds a world of talking, brawling animals and becomes apprenticed to a bear-like bruiser.



### TOKYO LANDMARK

The action of *The Boy and the Beast* shifts between a fantasy world and the real-life Shibuya district in Tokyo, pictured.



### CHILDREN'S HISTORY

The many simplified backgrounds seen in *Giovanni's Island* were created by an Argentinian artist, Santiago Montiel.

At the recent Tokyo Film Festival, Mamoru said, "When I have an idea in my mind, I can't help thinking about how I can express it, how can I make it wonderful, to make people laugh. It's the sheer pleasure of making it happen that drives me through making the film." He says *The Boy and the Beast* was inspired by the birth of his son.



"I'm thinking as a parent, how is he going to grow up, how are we going to raise him? Is he going to be able to find a soul mate or some master from whom he can learn about life?"



### RAINY SEASON

Rain is the central image in *Garden of Words*, the rain effects created both by hand-drawing and CGI.



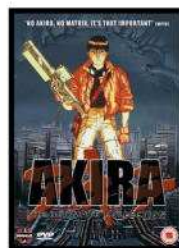
## 1972

*Science Ninja Team Gatchaman* stars a team of heroes in birdlike costumes. It was a likely influence on the live-action *Rangers* shows in Japan, later brought to the West as *Power Rangers*. It was also adapted into the English-dubbed *Battle of the Planets*.



## 1979

*Mobile Suit Gundam* is a space opera in which soldiers pilot giant robot suits. It launched a huge franchise, with new *Gundam* anime still released today. The original *Gundam* serial has just debuted on British Blu-ray, courtesy of Anime Limited.



## 1988

Katsuhiro Otomo's cinema film *Akira* is a lavish, violent urban sci-fi epic, with biker gangs and superpowered teens. It marked the first time that anime was recognised in the mainstream media as anime, although it was often mislabelled 'manga.'



## CGI IN ANIME

Will there ever be an anime that achieves the success and widespread acclaim of Toy Story?

Over the past two decades, there have been regular attempts to make all-CG anime, often (though not always) aimed at the world market. Some are enjoyable – we recommend the sci-fi action film *Appleseed Ex Machina* – and some woeful, such as *Appleseed XIII*, another version of the same property. The 2013 CG film *Stand By Me Doraemon* remade a beloved trad toon about a friendly robot cat; it was successful in Japan, but isn't likely to challenge Pixar in foreign markets.

The CG studio Polygon Pictures has made some ambitious recent productions, including *Ronja the Robber's Daughter* (a children's show co-produced with Studio Ghibli) and the horror-themed *Ajin: Demi-Human*. Polygon's space opera serial *Knights of Sidonia* is available in Britain.



### SPACE DEFENDERS

In *Knights of Sidonia*, the young heroes defend a giant spaceship carrying the last humans.



### TIME TRAVELLERS

In *Steins;Gate*, a motley group of youngsters in the geek mecca of Akihabara discover the secret of time travel.



### SCISSOR SISTER

In the hyper-maniac, hyper-cartoony *Kill la Kill*, a girl warrior has her power boosted by her sentient, blood-drinking school uniform!



### SUPER TOMBOY

The teenage Dragon Kid is the youngest of the superhero characters in *Tiger & Bunny*, and the only Chinese member.



**1992**

Sailor Moon becomes probably the best-known "magical girl" anime series, although the genre goes back to the 1960s in Japan. The 2011 series *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* brilliantly subverted the show for older viewers.



**1995**

The original *Ghost in the Shell* film is released with the help of British investment from Manga Entertainment. It's been followed by anime reboots and a live-action remake is now in development at DreamWorks.

► clients who approach him usually ask him to design cute girls. We were the first team to ask him for hero designs. So he kept asking, 'Seriously? You chose me?' We wanted him to draw cute girls too, but we mainly wanted him to draw heroes."

*Tiger & Bunny* is now being developed as a live-action Hollywood film co-produced by Ron Howard, who calls it "a great buddy story." In Japan, *Tiger & Bunny* has been followed by more eccentric hero anime, such as *Samurai Flamenco*, a show which begins like *Kick-Ass* and then becomes closer to Monty Python. Another series, *Gatchaman Crowds*, features a cheery heroine, campy silliness, knotty politics, social networks and an eye-scorching colour scheme. The word *Gatchaman* tips the hat to a seminal 1970s anime of that name, recut in the west as *Battle of the Planets*.

Away from the usual hero shows, the outstanding *Steins;Gate* is about ordinary youngsters – or at least ordinary eccentrics – who are conducting research into time travel in Akihabara, Tokyo's geek mecca of computer stores and maid cafés. The serial's first half blends sitcom and conspiracy drama, then the show transforms into a white-knuckle thriller

“We wanted him to draw cute girls, but we mainly wanted him to draw heroes”

and time-travel drama that puts Doctor Who to shame. Based on a visual novel (a computer game where you choose your way through a branching storyline), the show will be followed by a quasi-sequel, *Steins;Gate 0*, depicting one of the story's alternative timelines.

## CONVEYING THE JOY OF ANIMATION

The last word should go to two graphically dazzling series. *Ping Pong*, unusually, is a sports anime getting a release in Britain (you might have seen a live-action film version of the same *Ping Pong* manga, using *Matrix*-style effects).

In the animation, characters move in loose, idiosyncratic ways; there are crazy pavings of split screens; and yet it's also a heartwarming comedy-drama. "I want to see more relaxed animation coming

**2001**

*Spirited Away* is a film by Hayao Miyazaki, about a little girl 'spirited' to a world of gods, witches and a boy who's a dragon. A big hit in Japan, *Spirited Away* also won the Oscar for Best Animated Feature.





## BIKER GANG

Tiger & Bunny uses some specifically Japanese superhero conventions, such as the tendency for heroes to ride motorbikes.

## MAGIC PRINCESSES

Magic Girl heroines like those in *Madoka Magica* have been a staple of anime since the 1960s.



## PLAYING FREESTYLE

Masaaki Yuasa's *Ping Pong* has some of the most unusual artwork in a commercial TV anime.



from Japan," director Masaaki Yuasa told twitch.com. "Animation where everything is not perfectly drawn. The strict way it looks

now, it sometimes seems like working on anime is more pain than pleasure! I prefer to have joy in making animation."

A similar spirit animates the manically bonkers-on-a-jetpack *Kill la Kill*, where a girl with giant scissors and a vampiric talking sailor suit takes on a massive fortress-academy and its superpowered staff. Space and time bend like a Looney Tunes cartoon, but with more orgasmic explosions. The show's by the same team as *Gurren Lagann*, a mad mecha show from a decade ago. Its makers have now formed their own outfit, Studio Trigger.

One of the Triggers, Shigeto Koyama, was asked what distinguished anime from American animation. "I feel that Japanese animation is more complicated, more fetishistic," he said, "and that there's more division into different art styles, more of a need to continually come up with new ideas." He admitted, though, the downside to this creative splurging. "It makes it a little bit hard for ordinary people to understand and follow sometimes." ●



## DEADLIER SEX

This sultry female giant plays a central part in the second half of the *Attack on Titan* anime.

## 2013

*Attack on Titan* becomes one of the most popular anime series for older viewers. The source manga also spawned two live-action films. A continuation of the anime is due this year.





*Artist Portfolio*

# KD STANTON

One of the new wave of Chinese artists surfacing in the West, KD Stanton arrives with a prodigious talent seemingly fully formed, says **Ed Ricketts**





When I started out in the industry, being good at brainstorming ideas, communicating and being able to learn were my 'big breaks,' says rising artist KD Stanton. "As an industry novice, the things I lacked most were work experience, confidence and the mental capacity to deal with difficulties. Being good at communication and self-learning helped me avoid taking a lot of wrong turns. Being good at coming up with ideas helped me get better at solving problems in a short space of time, and also improved my confidence, which gave me the determination to overcome challenges."

#### FIGHTING AMONG THE MARKET

*"One monk versus bandits in the market!" An older work completed for Perfect World's Swordsman Online.*

This modest appraisal belies KD's astonishing body of work, which is now beginning to attract Western audiences and clients outside of his native China. (And if you thought KD Stanton doesn't sound very Chinese, you'd be right – his real name is Feng Weirui.) KD's images are wonderfully kinetic, matching up dynamic composition and incredible lighting with pure mastery of technique. His action shots in particular often look like frames from a film.

It's a technique KD has deliberately cultivated. "I'll create one or more simple compositions in advance, based on the different requirements and expressing what I want in terms of content," he explains in

Artist  
**PROFILE**

**KD Stanton (Feng Weirui)**  
**LOCATION:** Nanjing, China  
**FAVOURITE ARTISTS:** Ilya Yefimovich Repin, Anders Zorn, Adrian Smith, Craig Mullins  
**SOFTWARE USED:** Photoshop  
**WEB:** [www.artstation.com/artist/kd428](http://www.artstation.com/artist/kd428)

Mandarin. "But this method doesn't always work, because sometimes a certain requirement will call for an unexpected camera position, which tests my skills."

This, of course, is more likely to happen with a client brief that specifies a ➡➡



# WHIPLASH

Another concept scene for *Swordsman Online*, created in 2013.





## ORCWARD BUSINESS

The traditional orc doesn't come much nastier than in KD's own imagining of them.



## STREET FIGHTER

No story behind this one – come up with your own ideas about what's led to the confrontation...

“I think video gaming has been my biggest motivation in what I have achieved so far as a self-taught artist”

particular composition. “That’s why the basics are more and more important [to me],” he adds. “Knowing how to unite control, expression and the painting is the only way to succeed – because regardless of whether you choose the camera position by yourself or it’s set for you, in the end you still need to draw the painting.”

Those drawings generally begin on the computer rather than as paper sketches, though he says he doesn’t really have a set routine when working on a piece – instead adapting his process depending on the project. “Most of the time, for this type of drawing I start with an outline composition, and after that has been finalised, I do a basic colouring of the design, making adjustments as required,

and then I start to work in more detail. It’s a progressive process until the piece is finished. If there’s enough time, I’ll do some pencil drafts before developing the composition, which helps me get into the artistic mood better.”

## ALL IN THE GAMES

Incredibly, KD has never taken a professional art course – he graduated in computer science and technology from Sichuan University. But like many younger artists, he was obsessive about video game art in his youth and played many games, which have influenced his visual style ever since. Indeed, he says, “I think this has been my biggest motivation in what I have achieved so far as a self-taught artist.”

## RISE OF THE HORDE SARNUK BLOODSOUL

KD Stanton on his favourite piece of art and why it was a game changer for the artist

Which of KD’s pieces does he feel most proud of? “That would be Rise of the Horde Sarnuk Bloodsoul,” he says. This was a personal piece depicting orcs on the rampage. It has its own little backstory, which you can read on his website.

“You could say that I started to progress a lot from this picture onwards,” KD says. “It was quite a big breakthrough for me. This was the piece where I realised the importance of the overall composition.

“With my work before, there was always something missing in the overall feel and it tended to lack adequate dynamics and atmosphere. In this piece, I think I finally captured just the right balance between dynamics and details, for the first time. And that has gone on to be a big feature of my current style.

“I’ll never tire of making more art in this style, because I always find something interesting in the process.”

Now, as a freelance artist, he works with numerous local clients – on projects that rarely surface in the West – as well as with international companies such as Blizzard, Games Workshop and Riot Games. “I live in Nanjing at the moment,” he says. “I’ve also lived in three other cities: Chengdu, Beijing and Guangzhou. Because of work, I don’t have many chances to travel. The few places I’ve visited have influenced my art, of course. For example, the Gobi desert, Lugu Lake in Yunnan Province and Jiuzhaigou.”

China, of course, has a massively rich and varied history when it comes to visual arts, and KD isn’t averse to drawing on the country’s artistic heritage now and then – though you definitely wouldn’t stereotype him as a ‘Chinese’ artist. ➡



# LEAGUE OF LEGENDS 2V2

KD explains the thinking behind his kinetic concept art for the mega-popular MOBA

This concept art piece for Riot Games' League of Legends online battler is one of KD's favourites. It was designed to demonstrate the teamwork behind the game's 2v2 mode.

"I picked Draven and Darius for team A, and Katarina and Hecarim for team B," KD explains of the characters featured in the image. "I then did some sketches for the concept." He says the biggest challenge in this image was keeping the colour saturation high and having strong, contrasting colour tones.

He also added Riot Games' style, he says, using plenty of lighting effects to bring out the drama. "Along with the contrast of warm and cold colours, each character in my painting has a sharp contrast and reflects each others' personality. It also made a cool composition for the story. It's all about making my storytelling more interesting."



## 1 Initial composition

I start by drafting a fairly simple composition. Darius is attacking Katarina – Katarina, however, is cleverly dodging the attack – while Hecarim confronts Draven. Darius is a strong character, a hero, so I have him waving his axe in order to make him look more powerful. It's a night-time scene, so I have to think about silhouettes.



## 2 The story emerges

I brighten the picture a little, then increase the saturation. Then I adjust the dynamism of the characters again, experimenting with special effects. A plot emerges: Darius didn't hit Katarina but the brazier instead. Katarina dodged the attack and sneaked behind Draven. This makes it feel more dynamic.







### 3 Getting into detail

Draven is crafty, he's a guilty hero, so I give him a exaggerated pose as he waves his axes, as well as a sinister smile to help his character resonate with fans and players. With Hecarim, I let him have his shadows rush towards Draven. I add some background details at this stage too, and on the characters.



### 4 Background

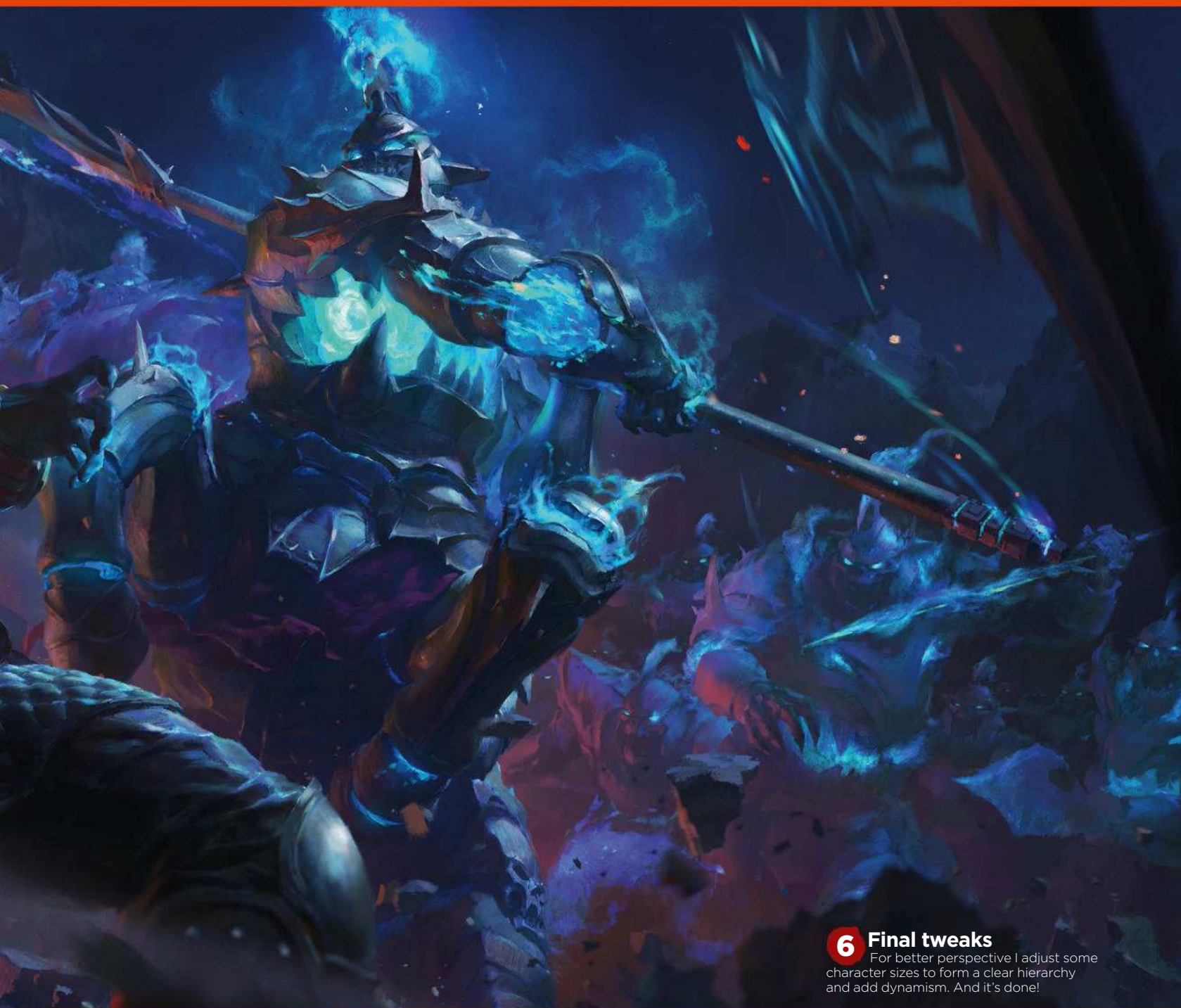
I join the fire up in the background and expand the scope of its impact. Again, I slightly adjust the dynamic levels and sense of volume. The distinction between primary and secondary isn't an obvious adjustment, so I dim my screen and adjust the brightness, to make the composition feel a bit more complete.



All images © Riot Games

### 5 More adjustments

Now the background feels a bit too close, so I join the distance between the perspective, characters and background. I adjust the figures again to highlight details. To help make the screen feel like it's moving I add some flying stones.



### 6 Final tweaks

For better perspective I adjust some character sizes to form a clear hierarchy and add dynamism. And it's done!





© Marvel Comics

#### MARVELLOUS

KD feels justifiably proud at having done concept work for Marvel.

## WOLVERINE VS DEADPOOL CORPS

KD was invited by CB Cebulski to paint a Marvel scene. Here's how he went about it...

"Because you don't have total creative freedom when painting established comic characters, the difficulty is relatively large. I pick one I know a little better, Wolverine.

I depict Wolverine riding a motorcycle in the wind, with Deadpool Corps as the provocateurs. I add a bridge above them, so the more dramatic lighting will be seen. I work hard to create realistic lighting.

I make it more symmetrical on both sides, to break the background feeling. I adjust the sign many times: I like to use elements of the scene to help manufacture the story. I adjust the overall light and add more detail. After adding contrast, subtle colour changes make the painting look richer."

© Marvel Comics

#### EASY MONEY

Oops, looks like you got my invitation, Wolverine...



#### REVENGE FOR SYNDRA

"Fan art for League of Legends, featuring Syndra, Maokai, Thresh, Lucian and Rengar."

➡ "What has influenced me the most is the aspects of tolerance and synthesis of Chinese culture, which is something that I've thought about from time to time and gradually started to explore," he says. "Regardless of what aspect of the culture [you look at], being able to examine and understand the essence of it and use it – that's my main inspiration."

Currently, most of his time is taken up with preproduction for two films in the Legend of Ravaging Dynasties (LORD) series, directed by Guo Jingming and scheduled for release in the middle of 2016 – although again, these are unlikely to be shown outside of China.

"My main work is handling all the different conceptual designs and drawing





up the artwork for the atmospheric effects, as well as overseeing the main scene designs," says KD. He's also been hired by Chinese game company Perfect World, which develops numerous online games such as the incredibly popular DOTA 2, as well as lesser-known titles such as Empire of the Immortals (a long-running MMORPG) and Hot Dance Party, another online-only title where the clue is in the name. "There, I'm responsible for the main poster designs for numerous art projects, and leading the team responsible for the preproduction concept art for CG trailers," he says.

Wherever possible, KD prefers to work at his clients' studios while on a project: "I really like working in the studio because

I like to interact with colleagues and find it interesting cooperating with people," he says. "I find it helps us all to improve what we do."

### MAKING TIME FOR SCULPTURE

Clay modelling is another area which interests him. His website portfolio, for instance, features a brilliant rendering of Sir Ian McKellen as Magneto in the X-Men films, as well as Bill Nighy in Underworld. Their accuracy is incredible.

"I love sculpture," he beams. "I also have a large collection of merchandise from films and television programmes. I'd love to make some things completely in my own style, but I lack the time and I'm limited by materials, so I only have some semi-

### KING OF LYCAN

More private freelance work and a great take on the well-worn werewolf theme from KD.



“I love sculpture. I also have a large collection of film and television merchandise”

### THE PRINCE OF ARC

Old freelance work for a private client, depicting Blake Archer – aka the Prince.

finished pieces at the moment." But it's more than a hobby: creating a 3D representation of a character can help with figuring out lighting and facial structure. "Sometimes you can greatly improve the structure of the bodies in a painting by referencing physical objects," he says.

"It can give you more ideas, too. For example, you're portraying a person's face, and you think the bottom part of the facial structure will look 'tougher' with side lighting – but then you try it backlit with a real model, and you discover something you didn't think of before."

The year 2016 looks set to be KD's biggest one yet, with more commissions and projects on the go and, hopefully, a move into other areas of development.

"There are a lot of opportunities presenting themselves to me," he says excitedly. "I'd love to be able to work with some of the masters, and I also hope I can inspire more people," says KD.

"In terms of films and television programmes, I'd like to increase my exposure to a variety of different conceptual designs and be able to discuss my ideas with directors." Frankly, we're as excited about his new projects as he is. ■



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A host of top-flight artists help us to celebrate turning 10 years old. Ross Tran's cover art ushers in the likes of Craig Mullins, Syd Mead, Brom, Mélanie Delon, Todd Lockwood and Allen Williams, who all contribute workshops. Plus there's a free 2016 calendar!



### Issue 129

Christmas 2015

Andrew Theophilopoulos paints Kylo Ren facing off against Rey, in our spectacular Star Wars special issue. Also inside are Aaron McBride, Iain McCaig, Terese Nielsen, Feng Zhu, Brian Sum and Hugh Fleming, all revealing their art from a galaxy far, far away...



### Issue 128

December 2015

We mine the rich seam of indie comics starting with 21st Century Tank Girl, brought to life by Brett Parson. Tintin and Hellboy also get the reimagining treatment. Fiona Staples talks about the success of Saga, while Lewis LaRosa passes on his comic storytelling advice.



### Issue 127

November 2015

Link, as painted by Even Mehl Amundsen, heralds our game art special, which includes workshops from Remko Troost, Elliott Lilly and Matt Gaser. We look at the rise of mobile game art and visit Wooga Studios. Plus, James Gurney paints an alien abduction with a twist!

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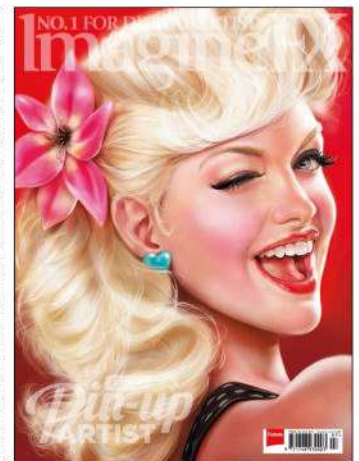
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**LOCATION:** Malmö, Sweden  
**PROJECTS:** Tom Clancy's  
 The Division  
**OTHER PROJECTS:** Just Dance  
 Now, Assassin's Creed:  
 Revelations, World In Conflict,  
 Ground Control  
**WEB:** www.massive.se



## STUDIO PROFILE

# UBISOFT MASSIVE

Despite being 300-strong, this triple-A games studio has a real sense of family about it, **Ben Maxwell** discovers

**U**bisoft Massive lives up to its name. The Malmö-based studio employs around 300 people and is currently embroiled in the ambitious task of developing (take a breath) massively multiplayer open-world online co-operative sci-fi survival shooter Tom Clancy's The Division. Supporting this mammoth effort is a concept art team just eight people strong (though Massive's art department has 11 concepting artists in total), who between them are setting out

the grandiose vision for The Division's frozen post-apocalyptic New York. And thanks to Ubisoft's powerful new proprietary engine, that vision is making it into the game with remarkable faithfulness.

"It's a great feeling to know that the final in-game look will appear like the concept art," says lead concept artist Tom Garden.



"This isn't only great for the artists who've worked with the concepts, but also a testament to our brilliant 3D art teams who bring it

to life in the game world for real. We're very lucky to have such a skilled group of artists to work with."

The team's responsibilities extend beyond concept work, too, and into furnishing the game environment with additional fidelity. Some of the in-game textures in the environment are down to Tom's squad, along with the fictional film posters, graffiti and other 2D artwork that decorate the game's stricken near-future setting. It's an approach that requires discipline and creativity. ➡



The Division's dilapidated, mid-crisis Manhattan is bleakly beautiful, the society brought to its knees by a viral outbreak is both poignant and jarring.



The Division's beleaguered urban environment has allowed plenty of opportunity to combine rusty metal, chipped brickwork and dirty glass.



A playable character brought to life. Characters are customisable, so plenty of clothing, accessories and weapons were created.



This imposing entrance to an unfinished tube line and station captures the blend of familiarity and threatening uncertainty that characterises The Division.

## TORBEN LINDSTRÖM

Torben joined Ubisoft as a junior concept artist

### So what is it really like working at Ubisoft Massive?

Super exciting. The stuff we work on is entertaining, interesting and challenging. From day one at the company I felt that the department leads and directors have trusted me and my abilities, and that is really encouraging.

### Which projects have you worked on so far?

Only on Tom Clancy's The Division so far. I joined Ubisoft Massive last year and it's the first commercial title I've worked on.

### Are you afforded a lot of artistic freedom when it comes to your work there?

It depends a lot on what kind of game you're making at the time and what part you're designing. There are some obvious guidelines and rules that you always have to account for when designing for a real-world setting in video games. Nonetheless, I still feel that I have a lot of artistic freedom in my work, especially in how I go about developing designs and what visual cues I choose to put in them to communicate a story.

### How did you find the process of joining the company?

Very enlightening and very productive. I've gotten so much out of having a steady platform where I can paint and design all day, together with a bunch of like-minded people. You learn so much as an artist from just having access to that. For the first half of my internship I had Titus Lunter as my mentor and he taught me some very valuable key points for how to think like a concept artist. Many thanks again Titus!

### And what kind of benefits are on offer for Massive employees?

I actually met some of Massive's concept artists for the first time at a sketch meeting here in Malmö when I had just started out learning the craft. Currently we're mostly just hard at work, but Tom Garden, the lead concept artist, is always hunting down workshops and courses for us to attend.

### What makes Massive's art department special in your eyes?

We are people from all around the world and are therefore diverse in our tastes and styles. And yet we have a very friendly and playful atmosphere and I've learned so much from being in this environment, even beyond concept art and game development.



Torben's been working on props, environments, UIs and textures for Tom Clancy's The Division since joining Ubisoft Massive in 2014.

[www.torben-lindstrom.com](http://www.torben-lindstrom.com)

“It's a great feeling to know the final in-game look will appear like the concept art”



Assassin's Creed Revelations presented a very different challenge to The Division, the game spanning three time periods – including 12th and 13th century Masyaf and 16th century Constantinople – which all had to feel consistent.



➡ “Working on a project like The Division, we put a lot of very clear limits and constraints in place regarding what we can do in terms of realism,” senior concept



artist Miguel Iglesias explains.

“After all, our game takes place in the real world, in current times, more or less.

But at the same time, because it's a game it needed some crazy stuff. And to find a perfect balance between realism and crazy and fun characters, gear and environments was a very hard challenge.”

Taking on this monumental task has galvanised the team, however. “It's no small feat to make a game this size with so many people from around the globe,” Tom says.

“I think that alone is a stunning achievement for us all. We've all grown a lot as artists working with this project.”

## HUGE DIVERSITY

Prior to The Division, the team has worked on a broad range of projects. The colourful, upbeat visuals of mobile game Just Dance Now couldn't be further from the human tragedy of The Division's collapsed society, and the studio cut its teeth on real-time strategy titles World In Conflict, Ground Control and Assassin's Creed: Revelations. This huge diversity requires real versatility from the studio's artists.

“We do look for people who enjoy working with realism in their concepts, and

## “Balancing environments and fun characters, realism and crazy was a challenge”

Ubisoft Massive has dispensed with the traditional gameplay archetypes of team-based, online games, which is reflected in the character designs.

of course people who love to create environment concept art, because this is the main bulk of work for a production like The Division,” Tom explains. “We all bring something different to the table and it's great when we can encourage each individual's personal style into the work we do daily. Some of us specialise in characters or environments, others make fantastic 2D posters for the world. I think it's vital to recognise who can do what in a team, and who enjoys some things more than others. That way, when you assign tasks to them you'll both get a lot out of it.”

Tom also looks for strong team spirit in potential employees. “It's a bit of a cookie-cutter answer,” he admits, “but one of the strengths we have as a studio is that it often feels like family. The concept art team is a very close-knit group and that's down to a friendly nature between us, and team spirit. It's important to remember that half of the job is the artwork, and the other half is interacting with others.”

Miguel agrees. “On the one hand we aim for the very best quality in our deliveries,” he says. “And despite all the pressure we're under and all the difficulties, we manage to provide great art assets to the rest of the team. But we've also managed to create an





This imposing fellow belongs to The Cleaners, one of The Division's in-game factions. Their design is based on the garbage collectors in the real Manhattan.



The game can veer quickly between peaceful exploration and violent combat and Tom's team had to communicate that in their concept work.

awesome environment of mutual respect and comradeship, where we all support and care for each other. We're a very tight group of friends who enjoy hanging out together during work, and outside of it, too."

### FAMILY FEEL

That sense of family extends far beyond the concept team, despite the studio's triple-digit employee count. Tom says he's proud of the way members of the concept team try to support each other while creating images. But they also work closely with the other teams that need to work from their images. As well as ensuring everything is clear, the concept team might also need to provide extra reference work, paintovers and more. According to Tom, this close collaboration helps raise the quality of his team's work, as well as solidifying the art direction and even narrative for a game.

It's hard work, but employees enjoy the benefits. Massive hosts life-drawing sessions and staff have access to a library of tutorial videos and books containing both in-house and external knowledge. There's also the opportunity to go on reference trips, and last year some of the team attended creative collective event Industry Workshops in London.

But Tom is clear on what he sees as the key benefit of being part of Massive. "Working with really skilled artists and nice individuals is a great benefit. We have a very nice studio culture!"



Concept art from one of the studio's earlier games, 2007's *World in Conflict*, in which the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 led to war against Europe and the US.



## Olga Andriyenko

The Ukraine-born illustrator reveals her love of depicting the female body and her signature fiery red hair

### Artist **PROFILE**

**Olga Andriyenko**

COUNTRY: Germany



Olga was born in Ukraine but works in Germany as an illustrator, comic/manga and concept artist, character designer and 2D animator. You can see her work in award-winning games like Deponia and The Night of the Rabbit. She currently works mainly for the games industry, designing fantasy creatures and magical places.

[www.portfolio.asurocks.de](http://www.portfolio.asurocks.de)



### HEAVY METAL ROCKSTAR

"Heavy Metal Rockstar was the topic of a 30-minute speed painting group, and I love metal! So I drew this crazy rocker chick. I always have a brush pen filled with red ink with me, so I can paint some fiery red hair anytime!"



### GIRRRRLS

"As you can see, I love sketching female bodies – they're the most enjoyable forms to draw or paint. To compensate for staying in my comfort zone I try to incorporate more gestures and body language in my art to improve it. The stars and moon and long hair shapes are inspired by Art Nouveau and the works of Alfonse Mucha."

"I love sketching female bodies – the most enjoyable forms to draw or paint"





### DEMONS WITHIN

"I have always enjoyed dark and creepy themes and watch all existing horror movies. There was a Halloween theme challenge with the topic Demons Within, and I immediately had this picture in my head and drew it with some brush pens."

### KOHIA

"One of my favourite things ever is designing characters: how they look, what they wear and how they act. Exploring facial expressions is pretty fun. This is Kohia, a character from the graphic novel project I've been planning for years now. She's a schoolgirl who's an apprentice voodoo priest in her free time."



### CAVE BABE

"Most of the time when I doodle around I come up with new characters. This time it's a cute cave babe doing her thing in the stone age. I can really imagine her being animated for a cartoon or having a small comic series of her own. This is drawn with my favourite sketching tool, the red Col-Erase pencil."



# Sketchbook



WHY DON'T YOU  
*Love*  
ME?



## WHY DON'T YOU LOVE ME

"I got bored during my usual anatomy reference practice, so I came up with the idea of drawing poses from music videos. These are from one of my favourites: Why don't you love me? by Beyonce. She's so expressive (and sexy) in this one!"

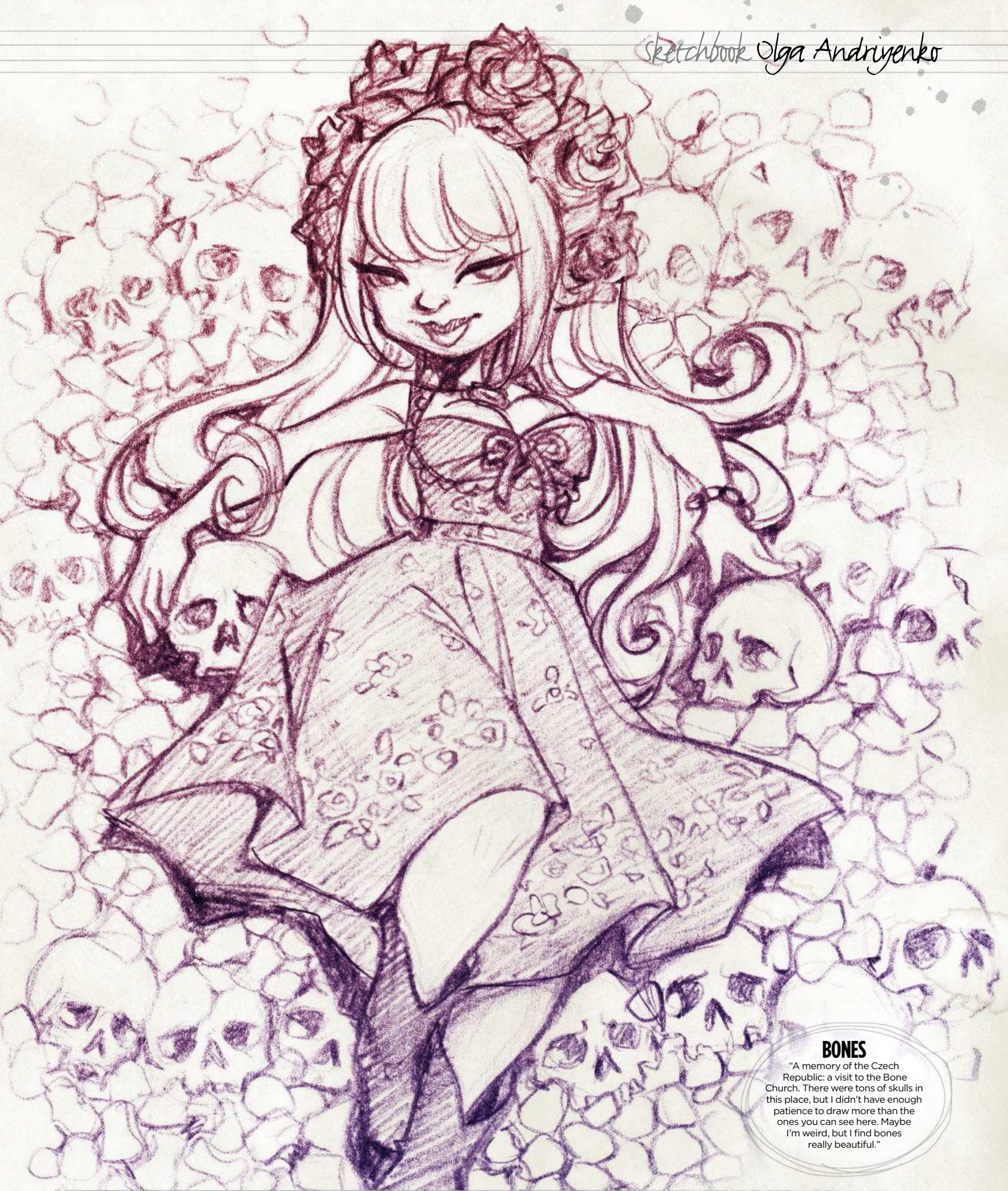


## RED WITCH

"Flowing long hair is kind of my thing, like black and red ink. And in this pic it paid off that I had pet rats for many years."

"I got bored during my usual anatomy reference practice, so I drew poses from music videos"





### BONES

"A memory of the Czech Republic: a visit to the Bone Church. There were tons of skulls in this place, but I didn't have enough patience to draw more than the ones you can see here. Maybe I'm weird, but I find bones really beautiful."

Want to share your sketches? Email us with a selection of your artwork, to [sketchbook@imaginefx.com](mailto:sketchbook@imaginefx.com)  
NEXT MONTH'S SKETCHBOOK: PAUL BONNER

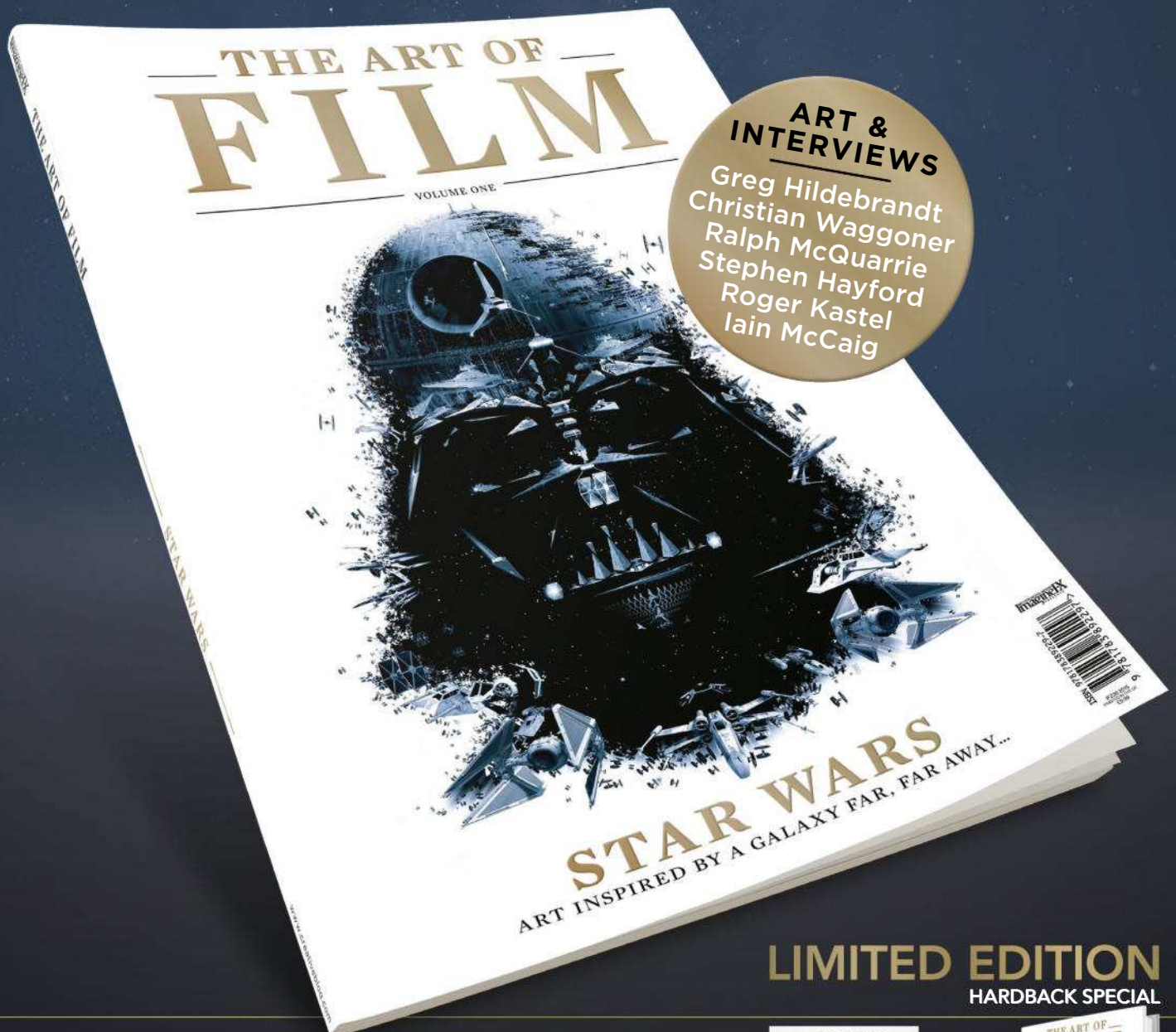


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# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Workshops

**Workshops assets  
are available...**

Download each workshop's WIPS, final image and brushes by turning to page 6. And if you see the video workshop badge, you can watch the artist in action, too.



Advice from the world's best artists

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## This issue:

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Photoshop

# PAINT JINX FROM LEAGUE OF LEGENDS

Discover how, with a bit of help from his Riot Games team mates, **Alvin Lee** illustrates a gleeful anarchist...



## Acting on feedback from teammates

At Riot Games we encourage our artists to give each other paintovers as much as possible, not only to better communicate our ideas but to also help each other grow as an artist. It's part of our feedback culture. Here Katie De Sousa, the creator of Jinx, has given me a paintover to better illustrate her ideas in regards to Jinx and this cover piece.

## Artist PROFILE

**Alvin Lee**  
LOCATION: US



Alvin is a senior artist at Riot Games. In an 17-year career he's created comic art, and worked with Capcom on its fighting titles.

<http://ifxm.ag/alvin-l>

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**W**hen I was offered the cover spot for ImagineFX, I got excited and then afraid. I was fearful of underperforming to the quality that's expected of a cover piece, especially without my good colleagues at Riot Games to lean on.

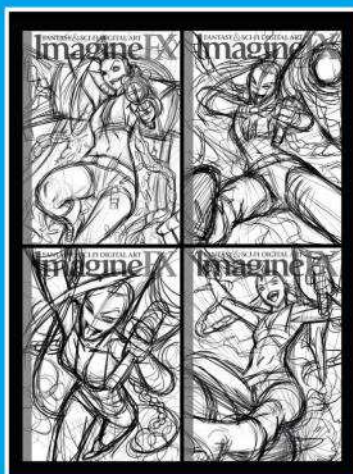
I've been a professional artist for over 17 years, but only a painter for the past year and a half. To retain the support of my team mates for this cover, I opted not to do a personal piece, but instead a character from League of Legends. I could also use this piece as an opportunity to share some insight into the immensely

educational, generous, and collaborative culture we uphold here at Riot Games.

So this image features Jinx, arguably the most popular champion in League of Legends. What makes her so endearing is her attitude combined with unconventional sexiness. She's basically a maniacal femme fatale with a plethora of guns, so I'm keen to capture the essence of her twistedness in this piece. With that in mind, I want to draw something captivating and sexy, with plenty of energy. Hopefully, this short workshop will document the genesis of this iconic character coming to life!

How I capture...

## THE ESSENCE OF A CHARACTER



### 1 Thumbnail ideas

I want to develop a foreshortened composition that captures Jinx's energy. My four ideas are: Jinx lying in a bath full of bullets; Jinx recoiling from a rocket blast; Jinx hanging from an air balloon; and Jinx riding a rocket into the sky. We decide that the final option best reflects her fun-loving nature, while also showing off her personal armoury.



### 2 Paint colour comps

Before rendering the chosen cover concept, I produce colour comps to find the best colour palette. I play with warm and cools, and saturation versus desaturation. My first comp is the one that's chosen: a cool blue/green moonlit night sky, with warm under-lighting for contrast. Jinx's skin tone is a cool lavender, with warm fill/rim light.



### 3 Lay down the line art

I used to be a comic book artist (I've drawn art for Street Fighter and Deadpool, among others), so I'm used to seeing form and structure in lines. As such, I often draw out my splash art using only line art. It helps later on in the painting process because you don't have to worry about anatomy and perspective: these core elements are already in place.

**120**  
CUSTOM  
BRUSHES!  
INCLUDING

RESOURCES

## WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:  
SMUDGE

I use this to brush in smooth gradient blends between two values.

LEATHER RENDERING

This brush helps me to achieve the highlights on a leather surface.





## Image review

As a team of illustrators at Riot, we try to get together as often as possible. Usually it's twice a week to look over all of the images that are currently in production. Here we discuss high-level ideas, give feedback, tutelage, and brainstorm ideas for future exciting projects.



## Using patterns

For patterns such as Jinx's tattoo you can either paint them by hand or save time by overlaying it over the form. Here, I use a stencil of her tattoo and set it as an Overlay layer. This ensures that I retain the value structure underneath. I warp the pattern to match her form and reduce the Opacity to show the skin's surface.

## Render metallic surfaces

I use a couple of custom brushes to achieve this. Usually I start with a Soft brush to develop the form, then I paint in texture using a custom brush on a Soft Light layer, and give it a matte or shiny appearance. I finish the metal object off with a Color Dodge layer for the specular highlights, to give it a sense of reflectivity.

## Colour grouping

To sell temperature contrast in colour such as warm versus cool, you can group how they affect the image based on their value. Start by creating a Color layer and fill it with the desired hue. Under the Layer Style blending options, drag the layer sliders to your desired value range. For Jinx's skin tone her highlights are a cool blue, with contrasting warm shadows.





# Photoshop GENERATE VOLUME AND DEPTH EASILY

**Svetlana Tigai** renders a semi-realistic portrait using light and shadows to develop volume and depth, before making the move to colour

**Artist PROFILE**

**Svetlana Tigai**  
LOCATION: Kyrgyzstan



Svetlana is a freelance artist who works in book and game illustration. She spends her free time developing personal projects.  
<http://ifxm.ag/s-tigai>

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**S**ometimes I paint in black and white. It's a great chance to work with light and shadow, and is a good technique for learner digital artists to grasp, as they practise depicting volume and depth using only shades of grey.

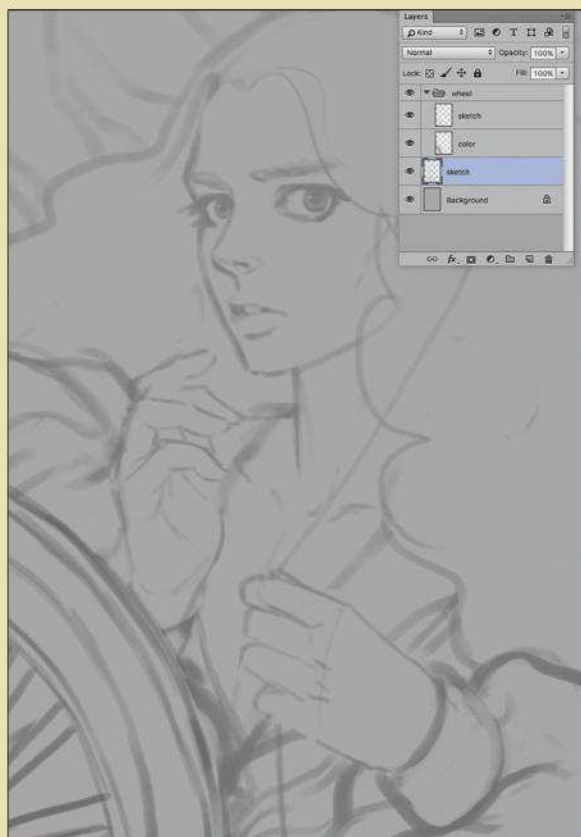
Before I start drawing, I think not only about the composition, but also about the setting. Beautiful portraits are improved if they have a story behind them. I want to make sense to all of my pictures. That's

the way I express myself – the way that I communicate with my audience.

It's not easy to tell a story without a detailed background. I like to draw portraits with the hands, because hands, like the eyes, can also speak. So if you want to draw an interesting portrait, don't ignore important things such as the pose. The colour palette also plays an important role, because it creates the atmosphere of the painting; it emphasises and enhances the mood. For example, blue doesn't

always mean a cold or sad mood, yellow doesn't always mean joy and fun. In the context of a story, sometimes a warm palette can add a sense of mystery.

In this workshop I'll draw a pale girl with very blonde hair in a white dress on a light background, and I'm going to show you how to achieve volume at low contrast. We'll end up with a very gentle and rather mysterious effect. I'll also show you how to colour a black and white picture using gradient maps.



**1 Laying down the initial sketch**  
It's important not to use pure black or white, because this may distort the perception of depth and volume. After all, black shadows don't exist in real life. With this in mind, I change the colour of the background from white to grey, then create a new layer for sketching and use a dark grey. This produces a very low contrast, making it easier to visualise my idea.



**2 Establishing the light source**  
I need to determine the light source early on in my painting process, so I use a large Soft brush to identify the main spots of light and shadow. Then I take the Hard brush and paint in some drop shadows. At this stage there's no need to detail individual elements of the image. ➡

**PRO SECRETS**

**Use Camera Raw filters**

This filter, present in Photoshop CC, isn't only for photographers. Go to **Filters>Camera Raw** filter and play with the temperature, tint and vibrance. Sometimes you need a fresh view on your picture, and by using this filter you can develop interesting colour schemes for your composition.









## 3 Refining the edges

Once I've decided on a light source and a main volume, I move on to enhancing the depth. I separate elements, using a Soft brush to apply a little shadow on the edge. Then with a Hard brush I remove excess touches. The Lasso tool can also be helpful for emphasising edges.

## 4 Detailing my character's face

To make eyebrows or eyelashes look more natural I don't waste time drawing each separate hair. Instead, I draw a shadow cast by the eyebrows along with the lit skin that can be seen through the eyebrows. I also use this same principle when drawing eyelashes and hair on the head.

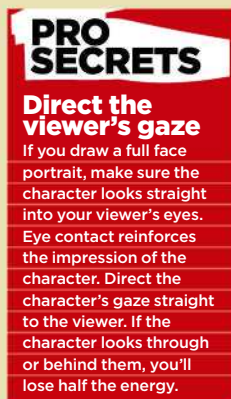


## 5 Introducing drop shadows

First I draw a shadow, and only then paint what the shadow casts. This means that I don't need to create countless layers. I prefer to work on three or four. If in doubt, I draw a new element on a separate layer. If I like the result then I merge all my layers. Furthermore, it's important that I accurately depict the texture of the sleeve fabric. First I make a multi-layer chiffon neckline and then repeat this for the cuffs, so they look like the petals of a rose. To give tissue more lustre and texture, I use a custom brush and apply a few scratches.

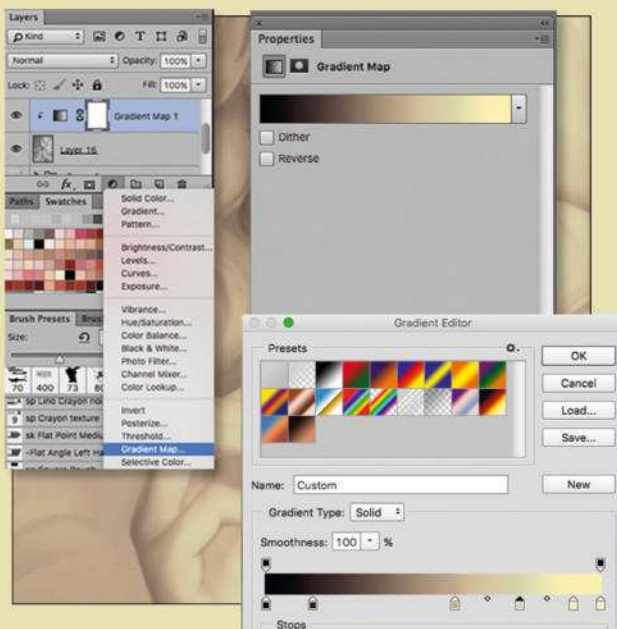
## 6 Painting curly hair

To create the effect of soft, silky, bouncy curls, I avoid creating a strong contrast between shades of grey. To focus the viewer's eye on the face, it's not necessary to detail all the strands, perhaps just those located near the forehead and cheeks. I also avoid custom brushes for painting hair, because they can easily create the effect of a material thread, rather than hair strands.



## 7 Making the most of Gradient Maps

Gradient Maps is a wonderful tool for colouring in black and white drawings. You can manually set any colour for each shade of grey. Find the black and white circle icon at the bottom of the layers tab, then click Gradient Maps. Don't forget to click the icon that clips the map to the layer with your painting on.







## PHOTOSHOP

### CUSTOM BRUSHES: SUPER SOFT ROUND BRUSH

I use this brush to establish a soft transition between colours.

### SOFT ROUND BRUSH

This brush isn't really soft, but it's not firm either. I draw everything with it.

### SCRATCHES

This is the texture brush that I usually use for drawing chiffon fabric.

### DIRT

You can draw dirt with this brush, but I prefer to use it for gold sparkles.

## 8 Adding more colour

I create a new layer in Soft Light mode and add a little paint to my pale girl. Even if you paint with vivid colours, on a Soft Light layer they work perfectly and help produce a soft tone. For my subtle palette there's no need for overly saturated colours. Bright colours will distract the viewer's attention.

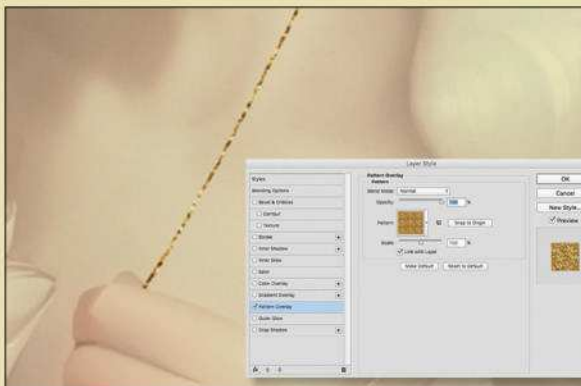
## 9 Take into account ambient light

Sometimes, to emphasise a warm palette, I add some cold colours on to the periphery of the painting. I start by creating a new layer in Color Mode. Remember that Color Mode transmits strong saturation, so to avoid a vivid blue, I choose grey. You look at the picture and think it's blue, but in reality it's not. On yellow, grey works as a blue. Try it for yourself!



## 10 Drawing and painting the spinning wheel

I create the wheel on a new layer. Using the Pen tool, I draw a clear arc, then duplicate it several times and shift every new layer down. I also draw a spoke and duplicate it three times. Then merge all the layers and apply Filter>Blur>Lens Blur.



## 11 Creating a sparkling texture

On a new layer I draw a black line as the thread. I select Pattern Overlay mode in the Layer Style dialog and choose my golden sparkles pattern. To make a pattern like this you need to open a new file with a picture of a sparkling surface. Then go to Edit>Define pattern and click OK. The texture will then appear in the pattern list.

## 12 Applying the final touches

I'm nearly finished – I just need to add the final touches such as extra lights and glare. I draw shimmer on the fabrics using a standard hard Round brush. I also add a drop of blood on the finger, which my beautiful needlewoman accidentally pricked. A barely noticeable mark of blood on her lips adds some mystery. At the end, I play with the Levels a bit, but not too much, because that can lead an excess of contrast. You can also adjust the Saturation and colours, if needed. And that's it! I hope you liked my workshop and found it useful.



## Photoshop EXPERIMENT WITH LINE AND COLOUR

**Sai Foo** takes you through his creative process, as he paints a character cheerfully falling from the sky using line art and simple colouring

### Artist PROFILE

**Sai Foo**

LOCATION: Malaysia



Sai is an artist based at Streamline Studios in Kuala Lumpur.

He previously worked in advertising and animation. In his free time he produces personal art a world away from his day job.

<http://ifxm.ag/s-foo>



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**RESOURCES**

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:  
CORE SET



My regular brushes include a lovely one for creating a pencil-like effect - ideal for line art. I use a default brush for fills and touching up, and a Soft brush for gradient effects and erasing.

**T**he painting technique that I used for this piece is pretty straightforward, so I'm going to talk about my ideas and decision-making processes that developed while I was drawing this piece.

I started this image for fun during my free time. I got inspired while randomly watching anime shows one Saturday morning. I wanted to convey a floating or jumping character, on a bookmark-sized

canvas. After trying out a variety of poses, I ended up with a female student figure descending from the sky.

The biggest headache during the initial stage was the skirt. I wasn't keen to go down the road of doing what's widely known as a "fan service" piece, so I moved the left knee a little more to the left of shot. My aim was to depict a character loaded with accessories, so I gathered references for a Japanese

schoolgirl's bag, and added it to my vague memory of what other items my school friends carried around with them.

In one of my sketches the character is holding on to her umbrella. It looked a little awkward and so I decided to separate the hand and umbrella. The reason for including the umbrella was to have an interesting shadow cast over the character, and to depict the effect this had on colours that were now in the shade.

How I create...

## A FALLING FIGURE



### 1 Capture the best pose

I start off by producing a series of rough sketches that help finalise the composition, character pose and accessories. I create between two and three layers over a sketch before I actually refine my art. I take it slow at this stage so I don't muddy the line art.



### 2 Layering and cleaning up

I love this stage the most, because it involves fixing every small detail of everything in the image. I also have to decide what elements of the image go on which layers. I'll go back to the refined sketch layer whenever I'm uncertain how I should progress.



### 3 Colouring and lighting

Right from the start of the process I have a rough idea about the lighting and colour I'll be depicting. I prefer to fill in elements using a solid colour, so that any future colour adjustments will be easy to do later on. I also apply a simple shadow here.



## Background patterns

For the background pattern, I make vertical lines and distort them with the Transform tool to create the perspective effect. I repeat this procedure and gradually create thinner lines. I select the Smudge tool and drag it across the line to create the wavy lines. Finally, I add a screen dot texture in Overlay mode.



## Badge design

Here are a couple of badge design that I did for the character's accessories. Most of them are actually just random designs that sprung to mind. I paint them straight on, because it'll be easy for me to skew the perspective later. I'll then merge them with the character's line art layer.



## Layering and rendering technique

This is the usual setup for my layers. I always use Multiply for shadows, with a mask so I can experiment to find which angle is the best. I use Overlay mode for colouring the inside of the shadow, and Hard light to paint highlights.



## Lights effect

For a final touch, I add laser light effects to make the whole image more vibrant. I draw a solid colour shape and add an Outer Glow using Layer>Layer Style. Most of my effects work is separated out on different layers, which makes it easy to amend and tweak.





Poster artist  
Andreas Bennwik  
takes on Bowie the  
Goblin King!

Next month in...  
NO. 1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS  
**ImagineFX**

# FILM ART

The golden age of fantasy film poster art

**PLUS!** Min Yum paints a brooding Brothers Grimm tale, Pablo Carpio creates futuristic 3D architecture, and all you need to know about conceiving for an RPG.

ISSUE 132 ON SALE IN THE UK *FRIDAY 29 JANUARY*



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ImagineFX February 2016



*Krita Desktop*

# MAKE THE MOST OF THE ASSISTANTS



Learn how to paint in perspective and create perfect strokes – the Ruler Assistant Editor tools make it easy, says **Katarzyna Oleska**

**K**rita's Grid, Perspective and Assistant tools can come in handy when developing a new composition, establishing perspective or simply painting shapes. When used in moderation they can help you create unusual perspective views and compositions in your paintings, that might have been harder and more time-

consuming to produce had you been working from imagination alone.

The Grid and Perspective tools can be edited and can also be useful as guidelines, but they won't slow down the painting process. The Ruler Assistant Editor Tools can be used in collaboration with the Brush tool and can help guide your brushstrokes. Here I'll show you how they work and how to use them.

## Artist PROFILE

**Katarzyna Oleska**

LOCATION: England

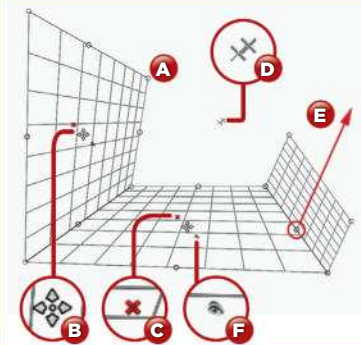


Katarzyna is a digital and traditional artist working for publishers

and private clients, specialising in fantasy and sci-fi art, portraits and caricatures. She's illustrated some major book titles including Terry Pratchett's Discworld series.  
<http://ifxm.ag/kataro>

## PERSPECTIVE

This is one of the tools available through the Ruler Assistant Editor, and is created by building separate planes with vanishing points. You can create many planes, but if you're creating a vanishing point perspective, make sure the vanishing points of all the planes meet in the same spot.



### A. Creating planes

To create a plane, click in four places on your canvas. You can adjust the location of these points later on. You can also connect corner points of separate planes together.

### B. Moving planes

Each plane can be moved by clicking a mark in the centre and dragging it around. If the plane is connected to another plane it'll also affect the other.

### C. Deleting planes

Each plane can be deleted at any time by clicking a red X.

### D. Vanishing point

Each plane has its own vanishing point, even if they're connected. If you want the vanishing points of multiple planes to meet, you have to do that manually.

### E. Creating a new plane from an existing one

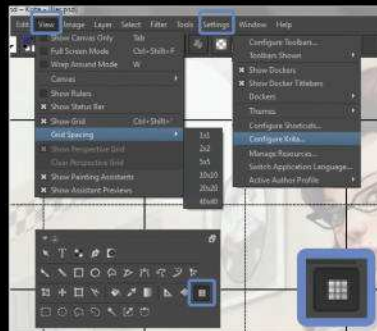
If your planes are connected, the easiest way to create a new one is to simply click and drag the mid-point on one of the existing planes' sides.

### F. Turning planes' visibility off

To do this you need to click the eye symbol attached to the plane. This will make it invisible: the plane will fade and if you then decide to use the Brush tool with Assistant mode on it won't affect the brush strokes.

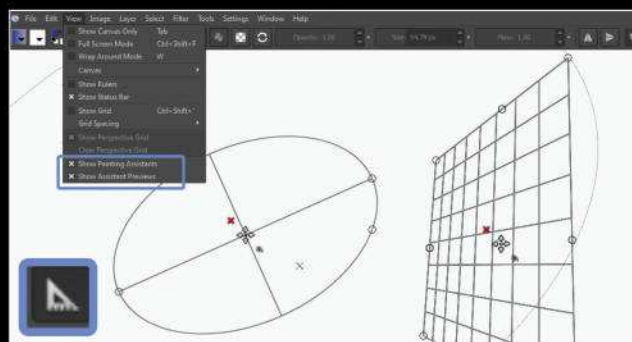
## 1 Applying the Grid

The Grid tool can be turned on and off from the top menu (select View> Show Grid). The spacing, number of subdivisions and colours of the lines can be changed (choose Settings> Configure Krita>Grid). The grid can also be altered in real time with the Edit the Grid tool, by pressing Ctrl and the mouse button. Dragging the mouse either left to right or up and down then enables you to alter the spacing of the grid.



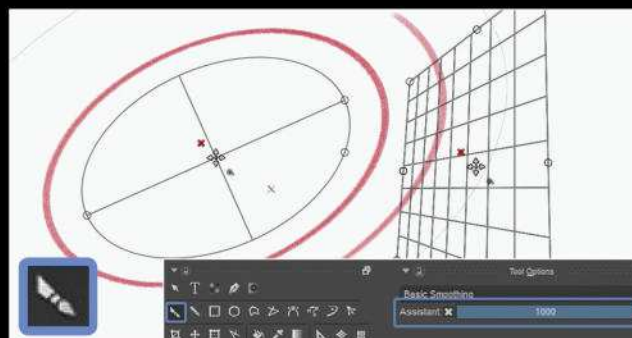
## 2 The Ruler Assistant Editor tool

This tool enables you to create shapes and interesting perspective views that you can then use as guides for your brushstrokes later on. Each element can be chosen from the Tool Options docker. Each can also be separately edited, turned on and off and deleted. Once you create your Assistant configuration you can save it and then open again in another file, for a more streamlined creative process.



## 3 The Brush Assistant

Checking the Assistant box in a Tool Options docker while using a brush will make it react to the active elements that have been previously created by the Ruler Assistant Editor. The strength with which the brush reacts can be adjusted with a simple slider. Note that the visibility of Painting Assistants and Assistant Previews (these are the lines following the brush) can be controlled from the top menu.





Artist insight

# SHARPEN YOUR CARD ART SKILLS

Fantasy card art is all about eye-catching compositions and engaging character designs. **Laura Sava** reveals how she achieves this every time

## Artist PROFILE

**Laura Sava**  
LOCATION: Romania



Laura is a freelance artist who creates illustrations for mobile games such as Legend of the Cryptids and Mobius Final Fantasy.

<http://ifxm.ag/laura-s>

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**

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**E**ven though I started dabbling into fantasy art as a teen, for a long time I never thought of it as any more than a hobby.

The first decisive step on the illustration path was getting a Wacom tablet, and switching to digital eventually proved to be a game changer for me, because it solved both the issue of speed and the high cost of art materials.

I attended an art school, but found that the emphasis was placed on contemporary trends, so I had to learn most of what I know about figurative painting on my own. However, a formal art education gave me a better perspective on technical matters and perhaps created a framework for an efficient learning approach. So the tips in this workshop are an assorted collection of theoretical

principles I picked up in school, personal observations and advices I found online.

I'm currently illustrating cards for Applibot's Legend of the Cryptids, a fantasy game for smartphones, so I'm going to use images I created for the company to show how I apply this information in practice and, hopefully, provide some useful insight for those who are interested in producing similar work.

## 1 DECIDING ON THE COMPOSITION

There are basically two types of composition: dynamic and static. The first is characterised by diagonal lines that add movement, while the second features strong verticals and horizontals that either help to create a calm atmosphere if horizontals predominate or suggest harshness if

the verticals are emphasised. I prefer static compositions, but they can be a bit dull for fantasy themes. As a compromise, I use softer diagonal shapes as accents in the foreground. For example, placing objects such as flowing fabric here and there helps to break up the monotony and develops a pleasing contrast with the background.



## 2 WHEN TO USE SYMMETRY

There's a time and a place to use bilaterally symmetrical layouts. Indeed, I'd go so far as to say that this type of composition should be used sparingly, but it's certainly effective in appropriate contexts. Its visual impact is high because all lines converge and the eye is drawn towards the centre, so illustrated subject matter such as book covers or film posters can benefit from it. Symmetrical poses can make a character look regal, powerful or heroic. They usually work especially well with characters who have wings and mythological beings in general, because they remind the viewer of iconic representations.

## PRO SECRETS

**Study photos, don't copy**

When in doubt, use reference. That doesn't mean copying a photo as it is, but studying one or more images to figure out how something looks or works. If you need to use precise reference, there are plenty of sites with legal free photos - my favourite source is [www.morguefile.com](http://www.morguefile.com).

All artwork © Applibot





### 3 APPLY THE S-CURVE PRINCIPLE

This goes back to ancient Greek art and is considered ideal for depicting the human figure. The body should be positioned in a way that describes an S-shaped line, so that the shoulders and the hips are angled differently. The most basic pose that uses this principle is contrapposto, where the figure rests all its weight on one leg. In illustration, this formula can be taken even further, and curves and proportions can be exaggerated or stylised according to your own painting method. ➡



## 4 DEVELOP FOCAL POINTS

The first thing people notice in a picture are human faces, so they become natural focal points and should, as such, be placed carefully. There are several ways to accentuate them or shift the interest towards other areas of the image. One is manipulating light, such as keeping most of the image relatively equally lit and have strong light hit the area we want to stand out. Variation in brush strokes or colours can also be used, rendering the focal point and keeping the rest of the image rougher and more desaturated.



“The first thing people notice in a picture are human faces, so they become natural focal points”

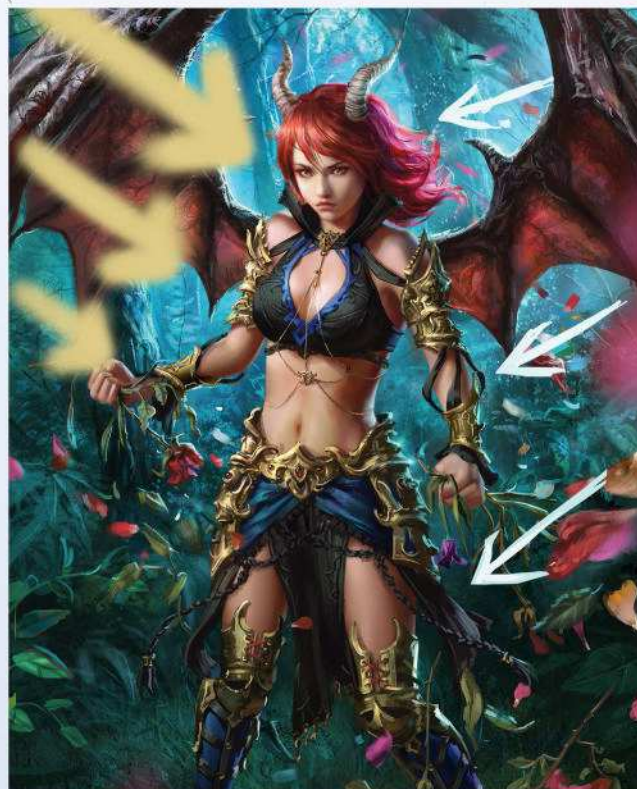
## 6 FRAMING TECHNIQUES

Depending on the purpose of an illustration, some limitations can come into play and one of them is framing. My card art is viewed on smartphones, so the characters need to be large enough to discern details and this means sometimes they won't fit into the frame. There are a few rules of thumb on how to crop figures: don't cut where there are any joints, never cut through the hands (they should be either visible or out of the picture) and, for portraits, avoid cropping the ears or chin.



## 5 DRAMATIC LIGHT

Interesting lighting can quickly give an image a fantasy look. One of the most commonly used – and my go-to lighting scheme – comprises a main softer light and a harsher back light. This combination is even more striking if the light sources have complementary colours, but this can soon become cheesy if overused! Another of my favourite set-ups is a single light source filtered through a window, placed at an angle that suggests the late afternoon sunlight.



## 7 DETAIL PLACEMENT

People organise visual elements in categories and group them into larger shapes, based on their proximity to each other. The Gestalt theory of visual perception has derived a series of rules from this premise. An open area or a barely suggested object will be “autocompleted” by the viewer, as long as its shape is recognised as a whole. This is why it's not necessary to polish every detail or worry about perfect edges – just ensure that the main shape is readable from a distance.







## 8 MAKE MORE OF THE BACKGROUND

In game cards the focus is obviously on the character, but backgrounds and other details add a whole new dimension. You can hint at a character's personality through their environment or describe their social status or occupation with various nearby objects. A scholarly character could be surrounded by old tomes and scrolls, a warrior will look more menacing with a stormy sky as a backdrop, and a character could be recognised as a witch even without stereotypical costumes, only by decorating her place with alchemical paraphernalia and other mysterious-looking items. ➔



## RESOURCES

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

#### PHOTOSHOP

##### CUSTOM BRUSHES: RENDER

To sketch and render most surfaces I use a simple hard-edged Round brush.

##### RENDER\_SOFT

I blend skin with an Airbrush. Unlike others, I don't mind the plastic look that it can produce.

##### OIL PASTEL LARGE 9

The default Chalk brush is especially useful in Color Dodge mode to create metal textures.

##### LACE

This is a lace brush that I use on fabric, wherever I notice that a costume needs 'something extra'.

## BRINGING EVERYTHING TOGETHER

Discover how Laura developed the character of Anneli, Beguiled Demon, from Legend of the Cryptids



### 1 Capturing the basic pose

In general, I don't make very detailed sketches; instead, they're rather cartoony. I change my mind a lot during the painting process and resize or move things around, so precise line work isn't for me. At this point I only care about finding a basic pose and blocking in some shapes and colours.



### 2 Detailing the face

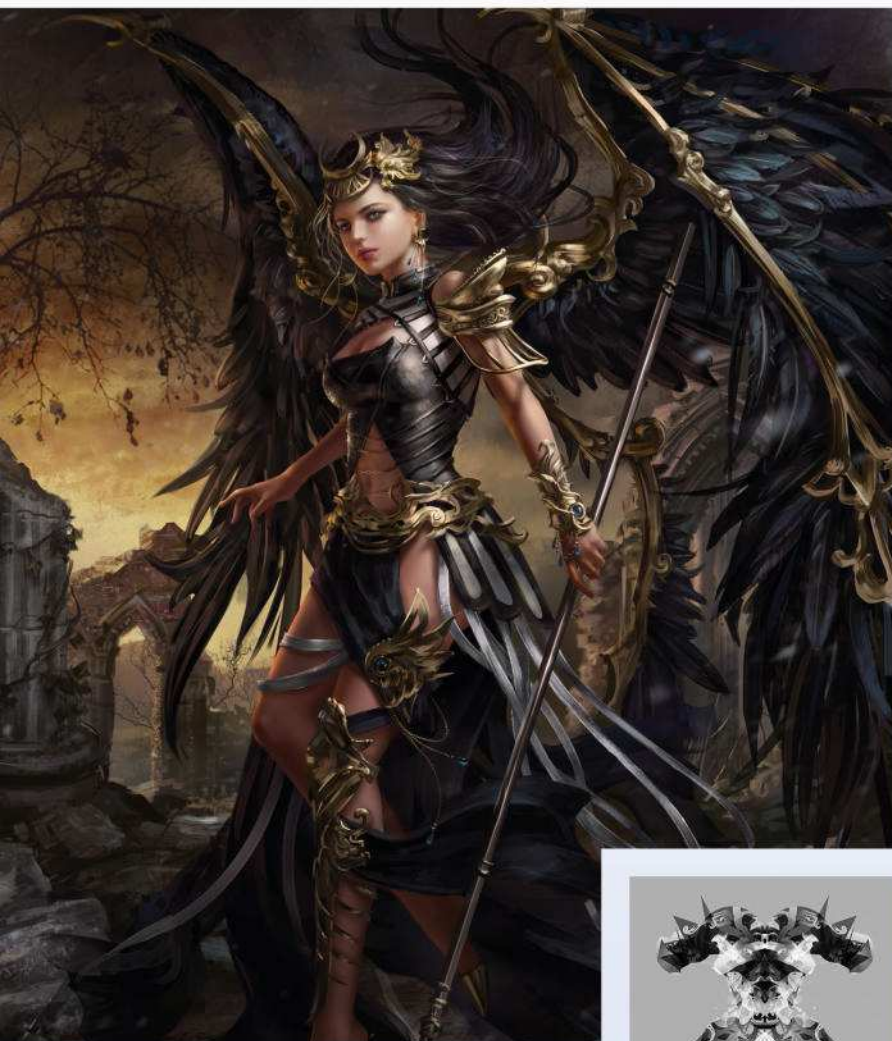
Ideally, one should work on all aspects of an image at the same time, but I often get carried away and forget to look elsewhere, so parts of the image are always more polished than others. Almost invariably, I start with the face and don't move on until it's almost completely done.



### 3 Polishing the scene

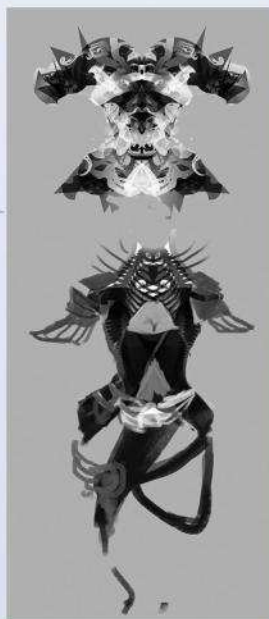
After completing the character, the background is the last element to be tackled, but I make sure it's at least partially rendered first, to avoid inconsistencies. Finishing touches are applied in adjustments layers, usually for improved contrast or colour balance. Overlay layers add depth and subtle details, such as dust particles.





## 9 COSTUME DESIGN

The greatest challenge I face when designing game cards is coming up with fresh ideas for costumes, weapons and accessories. I follow various fashion, history and culture-related sites and blogs, and I save the most interesting clothing and armour designs in an inspiration folder. I occasionally use Alchemy, which generates unpredictable brushstrokes and random shapes, and then I try to find patterns in the resulted image. Costumes can become quite detailed, so to prevent them from looking too monotonous and “crowded”, details should be grouped and placed only in a few key places.



## PRO SECRETS

### Take more photographs

Practice is essential in advancing your skills, but there are a few additional techniques that can be employed for the purpose of building a visual library. Taking photos will teach you to observe things more attentively, it will improve your composition and give you a better understanding of light.

## 10 GIVING METAL AN INTERESTING LOOK

Fantasy art draws inspiration from historical sources, so ornate armour and weapons are commonplace. When dealing with metal objects, I often block in solid shapes and use the the Bevel and Emboss option (Layer > Layer styles). This is only to create a quick base to work with and shouldn't be used as a standalone technique (except perhaps for very small details), because it'll produce an artificial-looking result. As a final touch, I add a few highlights using a textured brush that's set on Color Dodge mode.





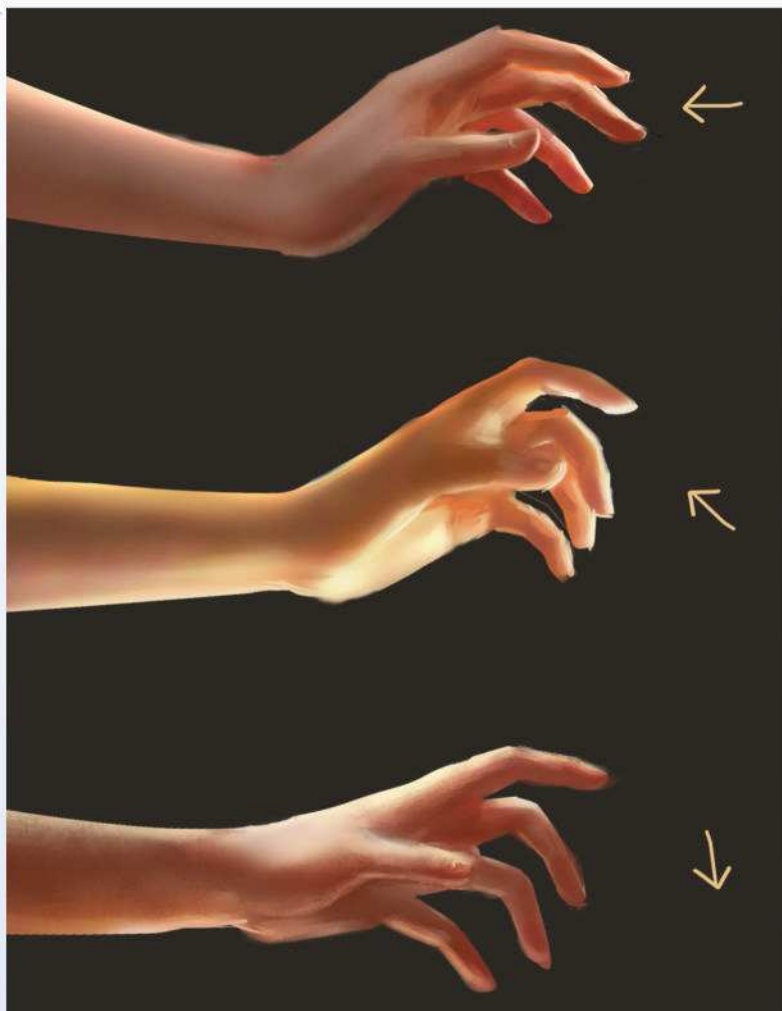
## 11 ADVICE FOR PAINTING SKIN

Subtle colour variation is crucial for illustrating realistic skin, but it can also take a while to blend convincingly. To save time, I've reduced this principle to alternating between the cold and warm hues that correspond to value zones: if light is warm, then shaded portions are cold and darkest shadows warm again, and vice versa. The transition line between light and shadow should be slightly more saturated. Skin is slightly translucent, and so bright light will shine through it, especially in areas with prominent bones and/or less muscles, such as the cheeks or fingers.



## 12 COLOUR CONSIDERATIONS

In theory, it seems simple to pick a colour scheme according to the established art theory rules, but achieving realistic results involves more effort than that. You have to keep in mind that an object's colour isn't as much determined by the way it's pigmented, but decided more by its environment: direct and reflect light, weather, time of the day and so on. On the other hand, values are even more important; done right and you can get away with less-than-perfect-hues. Complementaries are my customary colour scheme, with the warmer colour as an accent.



“Clashing elements that work unexpectedly well together are definitely good for fantasy designs”

## 13 BEYOND FANTASY

There's no need to limit your concepts at dogmatic sword & sorcery themes; clashing elements that work unexpectedly well together are definitely good for fantasy designs, whether the approach is serious or playful. Besides the obvious cross-pollination between fantasy and sci-fi art, other types of imagery, ranging from Renaissance art to clean 3D looks can be incorporated into illustrations to varying degrees. Steampunk aesthetics are known to behave well in the mix and classical pin-up styles are a perfect way to spice up a card character.







# Photoshop TAKE A 3D-LIKE APPROACH TO ART

**Ilya Kuvshinov** reveals how treating a painting just like a multi-layered 3D model helps him portray Katniss Everdeen from The Hunger Games films

**Artist PROFILE**

**Ilya Kuvshinov**  
LOCATION: Japan



A freelance illustrator and comic artist born in Russia and trained at the Russian Academy of Arts, Ilya now lives in Yokohama. He aims to create inspiring stories. <http://ifxm.ag/ilya-k>

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
See page 6 now!

**Y**ou can approach digital painting in a number of ways. Some like to paint as they would traditionally, while others base their art on photographs or CG renders. You can also use your tools in any way you like, creating new visual styles and working processes.

Yet even working digitally, there are limits to how you can adapt your art to the digital canvas. For example, for my private illustrations I usually work on between one and three layers all the time,

just as I would work with traditional oils on canvas. Unfortunately, the same approach isn't practical when taking on commissions from a client. If, for example, they decide to change a gun design but your gun isn't on a separate layer, then you'll spend a lot of time tweaking the design, compared to the time required if it's on its own layer, with textures and shades on separated layers.

Certainly in the case of commercial illustration it'll benefit you to know and understand the capabilities of the tools

you use, and how you can get the most from them. In this workshop I'm going to be showing you my way of painting an illustration as if it were a 3D model, complete with its own materials, textures, light and effect layers. This will enable you to change any element without too much trouble. I'll help you to concentrate on the painting process to create all elements of the illustration at the same time, so you can show your piece to the client at any step and it'll still look like a complete painting.



**1 Submit sketches for approval**  
After getting a brief (a quizzical take on Jennifer Lawrence a la Hunger Games) and searching the web for references, I started with four rough sketches. I tried to make them different from each other not only in composition or camera angle, but also emotionally: here are willingness, confidence, playfulness, dedication, so the client can choose what he likes the most.



**2 Polishing shapes and anatomy**  
After the client chooses one version, I transfer the sketch to full-screen, reduce its Opacity to 16 per cent and redraw it on a separate layer. I start with central and constructional lines this time, so that shapes and anatomy will be more precise. This phase is still rather rough, but I prefer to detail on the last stages, starting from the large-scale and ending with small. ➡

**PRO SECRETS**

**The Selective Color tool**

A very useful adjustment I use all the time to tweak colours is Image> Adjustments>Selective Color. With this, you can edit tones and colours separately - for example, you can make your lights and hotspots more blue, your midtones more red, and your shadows more green. You can also apply it as an adjustment layer by clicking the appropriate icon at the foot of the Layers panel.







## PRO SECRETS

### Chromatic aberration

Here's an effect I often use as the finishing touch to an illustration. Create a flattened copy of your image as a new layer (see below), then go to the Channels tab. Click the RGB channel's eye icon to hide it, then click the Green channel and transform or move this channel to create a camera lens distortion effect. Click the RGB channel visibility on again and go back to layers. Erase or mask the effect wherever you don't want it to apply.



### 3 Separating materials

I start to block separate materials on separate layers, so that later I can easily work on one element at a time, and hide areas using masks. Then I set my sketch layer's blending mode to Color Burn, duplicate it and add a Blur Filter (10 per cent or so). This makes the colours of sketch lines much closer to the colours of materials, and the blurring adds a soft shadow effect.

### 4 Color Burn for shadows

I group all of my character layers and create a new Color Burn layer clipped to the character layers group. I start to paint shadows with my elliptical brush and Airbrush with light grey colours – this is going to be the base of character's shades. So, the normal colours I blocked in step 3 are the midtones, and this clipped Color Burn layer is the shadows.

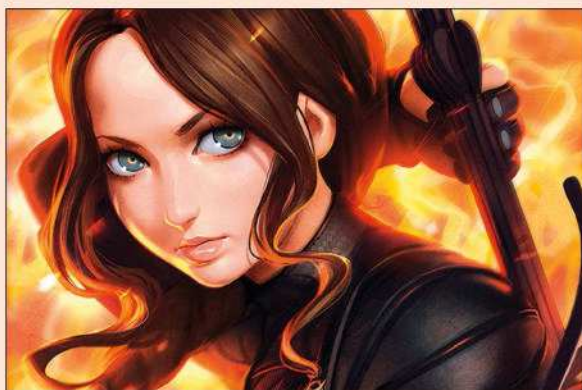
## Shortcuts

### Stamped image

Cmd+Alt+Shift+E (Mac)

Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E (PC)

Create a flattened copy on a new layer. Use filters, then erase where the effect is unwanted.



### 5 Tackling the details

I start to add more details and depth to the character by creating new clipped layers on top of the character group and new layers clipped to the material layers. In this way, when working with layers clipped to the group I add more volume, and when working with material layers I add more texture. I switch between them to progress with all the picture at the same time.

### 6 A fiery backlight

I add a new layer clipped to the character in Color Dodge mode this time, and fill it with black – when you use brushes with Pressure Opacity, this makes them look much better. I now add a backlight from the background fire with my usual airbrush and elliptical brushes, using a greyish orange colour. I also use Color Dodge layers for highlights and the highlights in the eyes.



### 7 Soft glow and refined shadows

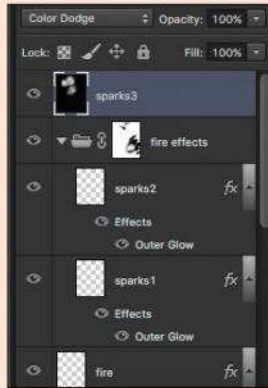
It's Lighten and Darken time! Using layers set to Lighten mode I create a soft glow from the fire on the character's edges, and Darken is especially convenient when you need to add more shades to your shadows but don't want these to affect your darkest shadows, like those on the hand and neck here. What can I say – blending modes are of real help when you want to speed up your painting process!



### 8 Introducing more details

For me, detailing is the most enjoyable part of working on an illustration. Adding more shadows, texture and volume to the base is very satisfying, but it's important to not get carried away and always think of the illustration as a whole. I add some make-up, casting shadows from the hair on the face, and more hair details. I also spend some time on the badge.





## 9 Texture brushes

Now it's time to make the armour feel more real. I have a lot of standard texture brushes and free brushes you can download with a lot of textures, shape variations, and so on. Finding a brush that suits your demands is pretty fun too! The detailing is 90 per cent completed, and we can now work with effects, which is my favourite part of the job!

## 10 Light my fire!

Using separate Color Dodge layers filled with black, I add more light to highlights and to the fire at the bottom of the piece. I also add some sparks, which helps to create a feeling of motion and the impression of a strong wind. I also add an Outer Glow effect to the sparks and fire layers. Now the illustration is starting to look more like I imagined it would!



## 11 Apply motion blur

Now I create a flattened copy of all the layers at the top of the layer stack (Cmd+Alt+Shift+E or Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E) and add a Motion Blur effect to the new layer. Using a layer mask, I hide the effect in areas that I don't want to be blurred: the face, hair, armour and other focal points. Here it helps to create a stronger feel of heat from the fire, especially on the edges of the body.

## 12 Make use of a photo texture

I have a lot of photos of random textures I've taken out on the streets, so here I decided to use a photo of the texture of a Japanese concrete lamp post to add a more grainy and random feel to the illustration. I set the Opacity of the photo layer to 35 per cent and change its blending mode to Soft Light. I also adjust the Hue of the photo using Hue/Saturation.



## 13 Unsharp Mask

Next I use the Unsharp Mask filter (Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask) and Noise filter (Filter>Noise>Add Noise) to emphasise the graininess and create the feeling of photo taken in a fire. At this stage you could say the illustration is complete, but I love to add one little, tiny step: chromatic aberration, which helps to create even more of a film feel – see the Pro Secret (opposite).

## 14 Finishing up

Finally, I check for mistakes by flipping the image (Image>Image Rotation>Flip Canvas Horizontally). If everything is okay, I flip it back and save! This process is different from what I use for private illustrations – it's a little bit slower – but with this you can go back to every last step by just turning off the layers, so it's easy to make changes and at practically no risk, too.





# JOIN THE CG RESISTANCE!

Discover how Industrial Light & Magic created the  
VFX for Star Wars: The Force Awakens



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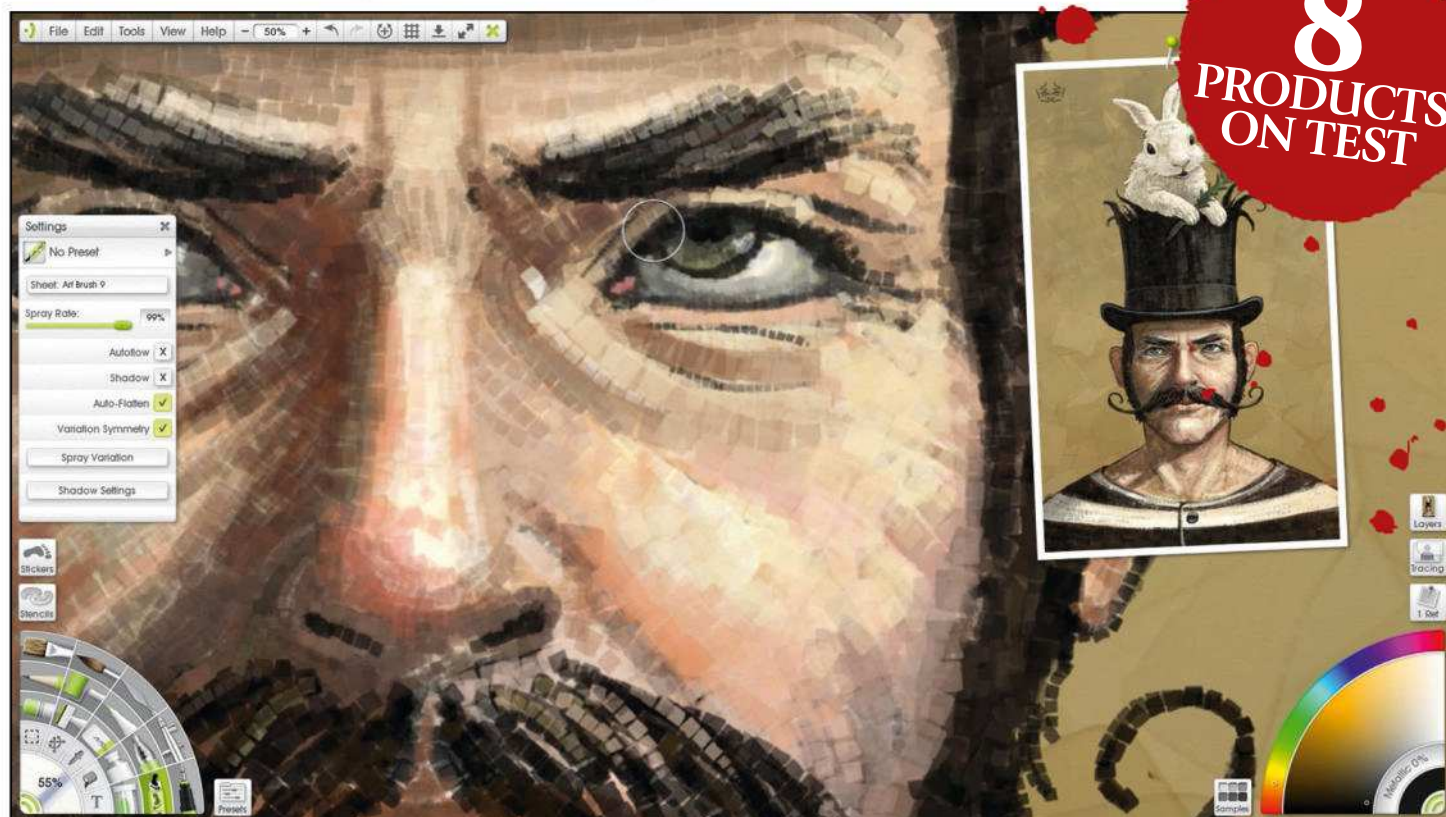
# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



**Artist's Choice Award**  
Art resources with a five-star rating receives the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...

**8**  
PRODUCTS  
ON TEST



## SOFTWARE & HARDWARE

### 90 ArtRage 4.5

The premier painting and drawing app packs a host of useful new features. Nick Harris is a fan.

### 91 Bamboo Spark

From paper to cloud, Bamboo's latest input device promises to digitise your paper notes and sketches with simplicity and style.

### 93 Pencil Mouse B3

We test out a stylus-meets-mouse combo, intended to reduce RSI.

### 93 Zen Brush 2

Is this clever but limited iPad app of much use to the digital artist?

## TRAINING

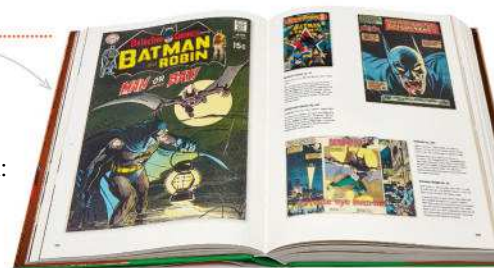
### 95 Sci-Fi Costume Design in ZBrush

Never mind the title, feel the quality as Luca Nemolato delivers a complete masterclass in character sculpting and rendering in this video.

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The Bronze Age of DC Comics; The Art of Stephen Hickman: Emphyrean; Animate That! The Principles in Depth.



RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Great Good Poor Atrocious



In the latest version of ArtRage, tool panes can be moved around the workspace and off the canvas at will.



## ArtRage 4.5

MAC & PC



**ALL THE RAGE** The premier painting and drawing application packs a host of useful new features

**Price** £33 **Company** Ambient Design **Web** [www.artrage.com](http://www.artrage.com)

**A**rtRage's reputation for realistic effects and easy-to-use creative tools looks set to continue with this latest version. Wet paints mix and watercolour strokes blend and bleed into each other with the all-natural zing we've come to expect, while the selected media still echo the bristle of the brush in use. A range of stickers, cloners, stencils, sprays and pattern and gradient fills offers convincing new-media effects, but it's a handful of new features that add a welcome extra layer of complexity to the established set.

With a tweak of your stylus's sensitivity settings for example, the new Tilt function makes pencil work more responsive than ever, and the Paint Symmetry option adds mirrored strokes to ArtRage's creative toolkit. The resource drag and drop feature brings global benefits, making



Nick Harris has been using ArtRage from the get-go.

preparing your tools a cinch: to be able to organise preset brushes and pencils into custom toolboxes is a blessing however you approach the canvas.

Budding typographers have something to shout about too, with the frustration of not being able to mix fonts in the same text block now a thing of the past. Improvements have also been made to the font picker, enabling you to preview fonts in context as you browse the list.

That the new customisable grid has taken this long to appear in the app soon starts to feel criminal. Not only does it make positioning items on the canvas and quick comparisons between objects (including references) so much easier, it also brings a 'snap to' feature to the existing toolkit.

In past versions, the sheer detail of brushes and textures has added more than a bit of sluggishness to the typical ArtRage workflow. However, the same can't be said of version 4.5, which takes full advantage of the 64-bit processing power of the latest operating systems.

Overall, the floating-panel interface is clearer, more responsive and more customisable than ever, and the workspace has been tweaked for more efficient desktop use. Whether you're a dab hand with painting software or keen to get creative on your computer with the least-steep learning curve and minimal technical know-how, ArtRage comes highly recommended. ●

### DETAILS

#### Features

- Clone tool
- Paint symmetry
- Stylus tilt control
- Single licence for both Mac and Windows apps
- 64-bit larger canvases
- Canvas grids
- Responsive interface
- New reference types
- Perspective and free-form transforms
- Multiple layer control

#### System Requirements

**PC:** Vista, Windows 7, 8, 10 (requires Desktop mode for Windows 8)  
**Mac:** Mac OS X 10.6 or later (Intel Macs only)

#### Rating



### ARTIST INTERVIEW

## NICK HARRIS

*The long-time ArtRage fan offers his thoughts on version 4.5*

### You've been a user of ArtRage for some time. Why?

ArtRage has been on my system right from the first free version 1. It always had a nice response time and a user-friendly interface, but transformed into a more serious pro contender when it got to version 2.5. Suddenly there were a lot of the layer options, like blending modes that I used in Painter. By version 3, which introduced a decent watercolour tool and the ability to make custom brushes, alongside speed and other improvements, I was sold. The interface has remained comparatively clutter free through to the current version (4.5.9).

### What's your favourite long-standing feature of ArtRage?

As a converted, real media watercolourist, I like ArtRage's watercolour tool. It may not offer the bells and whistles that Painter does, but its simplicity is much closer for me to real-world watercolouring. You don't have to spend an age tweaking settings, nor waiting for the brush lag to catch up.

### What are your favourite features in the latest version?

I find the reference image tool that was introduced in version 4 very handy. You can paste images (reference, sketches, whatever) on to the screen like Post-it notes. You can scale, rotate and zoom each image. You can also create custom paint palettes, mixer palettes and such from the same floating tool palette. I also use custom toolboxes all the time. You can group your favourite brushes along with a custom palette, all making them easy to get to. It's these features that make the whole experience more akin to working in the real world. Yes, there must be all the technical stuff going on under the bonnet of ArtRage, but they deliver it in a very relatable way.



Nick is a UK-based illustrator who has been working as a full time freelancer since 1982, mostly in children's publishing.

[www.nickillus.com](http://www.nickillus.com)



# Bamboo Spark

**DRAWING DIGITS** From paper to cloud, Bamboo's latest input device promises to digitise your paper notes and sketches with simplicity and style

**Price** £120 **Company** Wacom **Web** [www.wacom.com](http://www.wacom.com)

**T**he Bamboo Spark is billed as a 'smart folio' for handwritten note-taking and sketching with pen and paper. 'Smart' refers to the device's built-in electromagnetic resonance sensor, which enables it to digitise doodles and sync them to the cloud for online storage/sharing via the Bamboo iOS/Android app.

The Spark comes in three variations. The Cover, which doubles as an iPad Air case; the Sleeve, which holds any tablet with a screen up to 9.7 diagonal inches wide; and the Pocket, which has an inline smartphone stowaway and is reviewed here. All three versions have an internal memory capable of storing

100 digitised pages, which are queued until you next sync with the app. Each version also comes with a 30-page A5 paper notepad, which can be replaced with a stationery shop equivalent, and a pressure-sensitive Wacom ballpoint pen, which can't.

The case itself feels well built. An on/off switch sits at the bottom of the spine and a separate push button sits at the centre for pairing/syncing your device to the Bamboo app (a quick and simple process), as well as for capturing pages of notes. An LED above the button lights up green when the Spark is on and turns blue the moment pen touches paper, to indicate that capture has begun.

The pen comes with two cartridge refills and is weighted like a typical ballpoint. It's smooth to touch, has a comfortable grip and lays ink neatly. But while its pressure sensitivity works fine for note-taking and simple sketching, more detailed work fails to convert to digital so well and the result doesn't hold a candle to a dedicated stylus/tablet combo. Digital 'smudging' can also occur if you accidentally move or crease the notepad when drawing, since it's the pen strokes that are captured rather than the final sketch. The upshot, though, is that the app's Split Image feature enables you to replay a timeline of your strokes and save two images either side of any point in your drawing process.

Artists who like to pen simple sketches on paper should enjoy using the Spark. But if your early drafts tend to get messy, you may want to stick with tried-and-tested tradition.

**“You can replay a timeline of your strokes and save two images either side of any point in your drawing process”**

## DETAILS

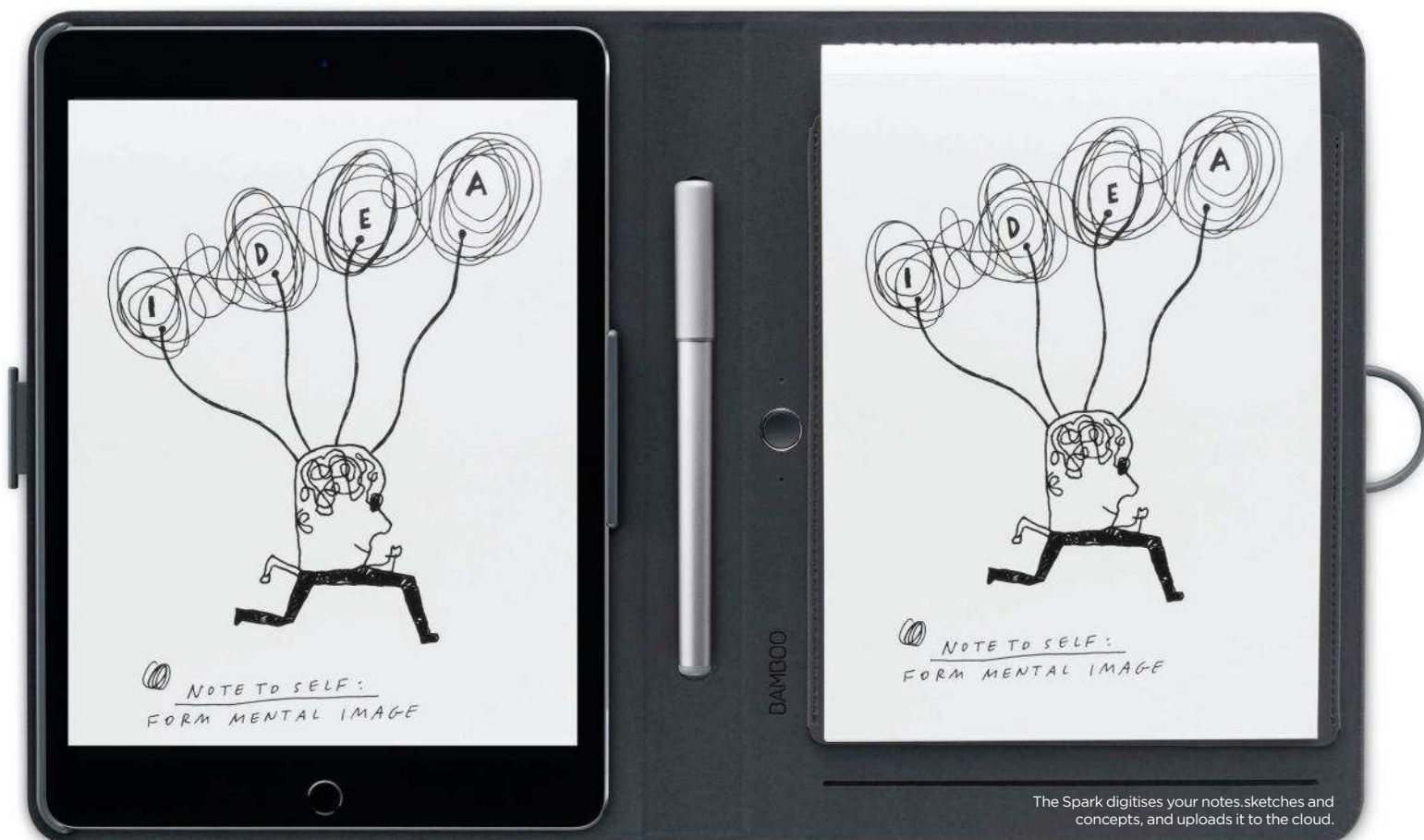
### Features

- 100-page internal memory
- Eight-hour battery life
- Micro-USB charging cable
- Proprietary ballpoint pen with two refills
- 1,024 levels of pressure sensitivity
- 5GB free Wacom Cloud storage
- Split Page timeline feature
- Multiple export options
- Vector-based digitisation
- Supports InkSpace and WILL Universal Ink

### System Requirements

- Android:** Android 4.3 or later
- Apple:** Bluetooth Smart-ready devices: iPad Mini, iPad 3, iPad Air or later (iOS8 or later); iPhone 4s or later (iOS8 or later)

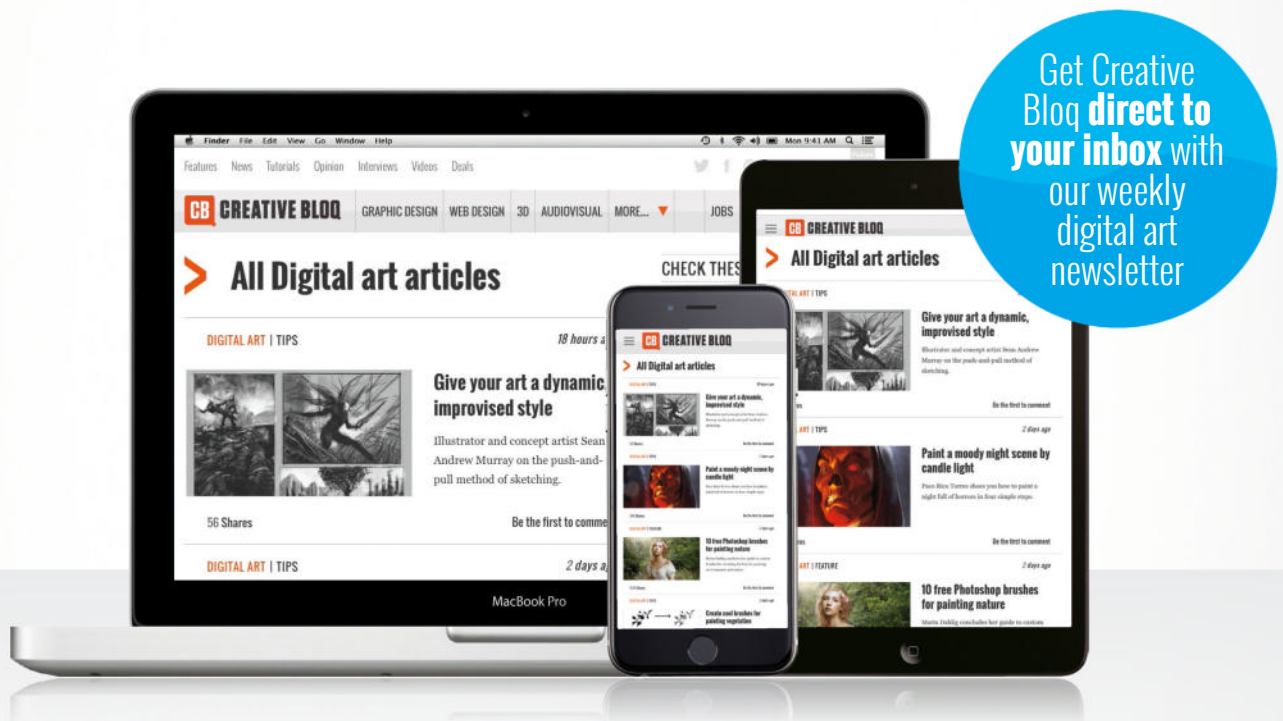
### Rating



The Spark digitises your notes, sketches and concepts, and uploads it to the cloud.



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[www.creativebloq.com](http://www.creativebloq.com)



The B3 is oddly attractive, with smooth lines and no hard edges.



MAC  
&  
PC

## Mouse B3

**DANGER MOUSE** Could this kooky stylus-mouse mashup reduce RSI?

**Price** £80

**Company** Penclic

**Web** [www.penclic.se](http://www.penclic.se)

**RATING**

**Repetitive strain injury affects so many PC users it's no wonder devices are designed to limit risks and Penclic's B3 is one solution.**

Installation of the B3 is a simple pairing task with this version, which communicates with your Mac or PC via Bluetooth (there's a wireless version too). Along with the power and pairing buttons on the underside there's also a DPI switch, which enables you to choose from various sensitivities, from 800-1,600 DPI, although rather annoyingly it defaults to 1,200 when switched on.

The B3 looks like both mouse and stylus, but doesn't quite act like either. The stylus part, which you hold during operation, has the buttons on it and it swivels at the nib, but you need to keep the mouse part flat on your work surface. Unfortunately the plastic feels a little fragile, and you may find yourself straining to apply less pressure than you normally would.

Whether this prevents RSI is something we probably won't know for years. The feeling we have is that this kind of input would be great for day-to-day office-based tasks, but possibly not as useful for painting with confidence and flair.



All the setup buttons are hidden underneath, giving the visible parts a clean appearance.



The options may be limited, but for the intended task they work well, as this sepia ink image shows.

## Zen Brush 2 iPad

**SWEEPING UP** We find out if this clever but limited iPad app is of use to the digital artist who's keen to experiment with virtual ink brushes...

**Price** £2.29 **Company** Psoft Mobile **Web** [www.psoftmobile.net](http://www.psoftmobile.net)

**U**nless you get the urge – or the commission – to create Japanese calligraphic-style art or lettering, then the Zen Brush 2 is probably not worth the small outlay, although you might have some fun giving this competent app a try.

When run on various ages and models of iPhone and iPad – the first real test any art app should run through – it stayed smooth and responsive. There is a slight lag between the tail of any stroke catching up to the input, but it never feels like it gets in the way.

The features are limited, as you might expect from something aimed so squarely at narrow usage, and that's perfectly okay. The tools work well, from the brush options that cover black and red strokes, to sub-controls such as tone and brush dryness – which is impressive.

If you want to use this, forget the phone version of Zen Brush 2. It works fine, but not in any way that inspires creativity and that's down to how the app interprets input. If you have a light touch, only a small amount of skin contact is made, which the app reads as a light stroke.



However, press harder and your fingertip will splay, covering more glass, hence a heavier stroke.

The app is clever and it works. But using this on the iPad Pro is a much better experience. Throw the Apple Pencil into the mix (or limited other styluses, with mixed results) and you're on to a winner. As long as you only really want to draw misinterpreted tattoos for teenage girls.

Although limited, Zen Brush 2 still works smoothly on a phone, as long as it's a plus-size device.

### DETAILS

#### Features

- Simulated pressure sensitivity with finger
- Dry brush option works really well and look great
- Some support for stylus input
- iPad Pro and pencil offers pressure and orientation sensitivity
- Good selection of save/export options

#### System Requirements

Mac: iOS 8+

#### Rating



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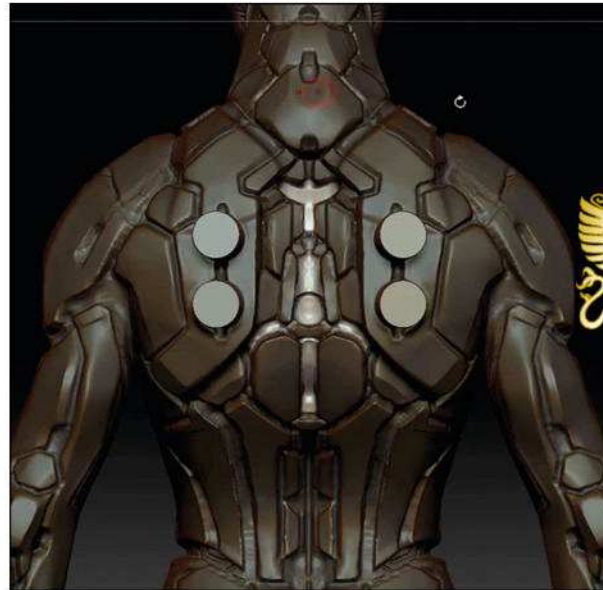
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Luca Nemolato creates a CG sci-fi character using industry-standard software.



The layers of detail Luca adds to his design include imported polygon models, which he calls "energy discs".



Maintaining a library of graphics and textures means Luca can easily add interesting details that make the model feel more real.



## Sci-Fi Costume Design in ZBrush

**AN EYE FOR DETAIL** Never mind the title, feel the quality as Luca Nemolato delivers a complete masterclass in character sculpting and rendering

**Publisher** The Gnomon Workshop **Price** \$59 **Format** Digital download **Web** [www.thegnomonworkshop.com](http://www.thegnomonworkshop.com)

**T**here's good news and bad news when it comes to this video from Luca Nemolato. The bad news first: despite the title, there isn't a great deal said here about costume design. If you start watching hoping to learn about iterating designs from the reference and inspiration you've gathered, you'll be disappointed.

However, if you're in the market for a video on working up concepts of new characters with a 3D software pipeline, the good news is that this is about as definitive a treatment of the topic as you're likely to find.

More than half of the video is an exhaustive ZBrush session in which Luca takes a plain model of a female figure and turns it into the future warrior of sci-fi fans' dreams. A few simple brush choices are all he needs as he defines the basic forms before going to town with the detail.

With the sculpt more or less done, Luca poses the model using ZBrush's



### DETAILS

#### Topics covered

- Sculpting in ZBrush
- Adding detail and rhythm
- Posing the model
- Prepping the model for export
- Rendering in KeyShot
- Render passes and alphas
- Compositing in Photoshop
- Photo-bashing

#### Length

286 minutes

#### Rating



Transpose tool. He shows you how to fix any areas the procedure might break and runs through decimation, which is ZBrush's process for reducing the polygon count without losing the detail you've worked so hard on. It adds up to a textbook example of sound ZBrush practice, so that your model is ready to use in other CG software.

Luca's renderer of choice is the well-regarded KeyShot. Here he quickly puts together a series of renders from different angles – in effect, these are the initial concepts you'd show to your art director or client. The chosen shot is output as a set of render passes and alphas, making the final stages in Photoshop much easier.

In the Photoshop session, Luca piles on the detail, integrating surface texture, grime, graphics, glows and a photographed backdrop. The manner in which Luca keeps focused on his task, delivering detailed narration with useful tips for nearly five hours, is incredibly impressive. ●

### ARTIST PROFILE LUCA NEMOLATO

Luca is a concept artist working for film, television, video games and commercials. He started his education in his native Italy, where he studied fine art, specialising in painting and sculpting. He continued his education in the US, studying with some of the best concept artists in the industry. Luca has made a name for himself working on projects including Independence Day 2, Dawn of the



Planet of the Apes, X-Men: Days of Future Past, Falling Skies, Once Upon a Time, Maleficent and more.

[www.lucanemolato.com](http://www.lucanemolato.com)





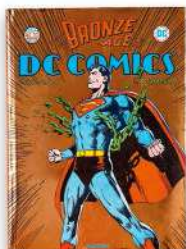
# The Bronze Age of DC Comics

**NICELY BRONZED** The large format and stunning bronze foil jacket might be collector bait, but the real value lies on the pages inside

**Author** Paul Levitz **Publisher** Taschen **Price** £35 **Web** [www.taschen.com](http://www.taschen.com) **Available Now**

**D**rawing a comparison to the archaeological period of discovery that gave us metalworking, author Paul Levitz sees the Bronze Age of DC Comics as a “time in comics full of discovery of creative tools that would come to full fruition” and proceeds to qualify this notion with over 400 XXL pages of comic covers, interior art and profiles of noteworthy DC artists and writers. You don’t need to be a hardcore DC fan to appreciate the changes that comics underwent during this period, or how those influential creators at DC would come to shape the comics of today.

The period under excavation is from 1970 to 1984. During this time, comic covers become more daring in



A detail of the Green Arrow cover from 1983, which signalled the relaunch of the bearded superhero with a bow.



language and sophisticated in composition, signalling a shift in direction steered by a new generation of artists and writers searching for a more elevated platform from which to address social issues and create more mature storylines. In the opening pages Paul interviews one such “erudite hippie” (his words), writer and editor Dennis O’Neil. Dennis recalls how DC management complained about the long-haired “delivery boys” loitering the offices, unaware that they were actually new writers Steve Skeates and Dennis himself.

Almost every other page of this book has large, if not full-bleed, examples of cover and page art, scaled up 20 per cent from its original size. With the increase in size comes a heightened sense of nostalgia. There’s something evocative about those printing dots being even more apparent – coupled with that new-print smell – that transports you back to pouring over every panel of that Batman comic which got you hooked in the first place.

In the later half of the book we begin to see evidence of DC’s growth as a publisher. Style guides are implemented; printing moves from large letterpresses to offset, which visibly improves reproduction quality;



Wonder Woman on the cover of Ms. magazine, an American liberal feminist title launched in 1972.

and creative merchandising and licensing begins to shape the business. Richard Donner’s 1978 Superman film also receives justifiable coverage here, with archival photography from on and off set. We find out that the Man of Steel movie swooped in just in time to save DC Comics from the crippling DC Implosion of 1978.

The book closes with the introduction of two comic luminaries that would change DC, and comics, forever: Alan Moore and Frank Miller. As all good final prequel stories, The Bronze Age of DC Comics ends here, setting us up nicely for more stories to come.

**RATING**



# The Art of Stephen Hickman: Emphyrean

**HEAVENLY REALISM** From Tolkien to Thomas the Rhymer, Stephen's painting insights and techniques will have you reaching for your brushes...

**Author** Stephen Hickman **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £25 **Web** [www.titanbooks.com](http://www.titanbooks.com) **Available** Now

**T**here's always been a strong bias towards imaginative realism from publishers of fantasy fiction. Readers respond well to cover art that skilfully depicts exotic worlds and characters.

If you're an artist proficient at painting ornate filigree on glowing gold armour you might just get noticed. But if you're an artist whose work can elicit a deep, emotional response then you're going to end up on the short list. Look for Stephen's name on that list – it's the one that's underlined. Several times.



Stephen's self-authored book is packed full of personal insight. We learn that his mastery stems from his own fascination with heritage, which goes beyond his admiration for past art masters all the way back to identifying archetypes within mythology. He reveals this through candid extended captions for each painting, all appended with technical notes for those of us hungry to learn

the ingredients required to create such fulfilling paintings. Paintings like Thomas The Rhymer and The Harp of Galadriel (shown above) are alive with subjects and details rendered with real vitality. There's an ebb and flow that goes beyond the mechanics of painting to elevate each scene: the book is pure fantasy art inspiration.

**RATING**

Gaffer Gangee and the Black Rider was an oil painting that Stephen revisited in Photoshop.



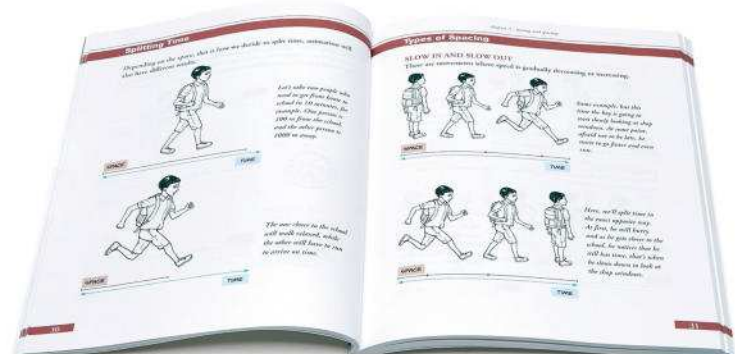
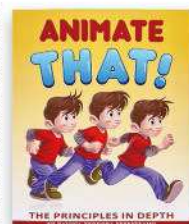
# Animate That! The Principles in Depth

**READ THIS!** This book is a welcoming gateway to animation – but will also be of interest to illustrators who want to put more zing into their figure art

**Author** Raluca Teodora Feresteanu **Publisher** Laudatio Verlag **Price** £16 **Web** [www.animationabc.com](http://www.animationabc.com) **Available** Now

**T**he expressiveness of animation demands animators become keen observers. Required skills include knowing how best to pose a character to suggest mood, how various objects interact and how to stage scenes. The list goes on, and all these principles are applicable to static art as much as they are to animated figures.

Animate That! does a good job at giving beginners the basics and terminology that they'll need to know,



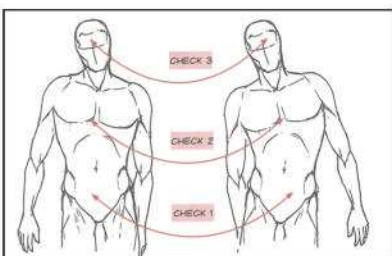
before deciding which style of animation to pursue: 2D or 3D. The book covers subjects such as timing, speed, weight and tension. These are topics that an illustrator may not naturally consider when producing their art, but grasping such animation fundamentals can only enhance their static artwork.

The book's illustrations – the majority of which feature humans in

various poses and situations – are simple and clear, and the text is broken down into short, digestible caption-length chunks. Occasionally the English suffers from translation issues from the author's native German, but we can forgive this seeing that this instructional book is so learner-friendly.

**RATING**

Animate That! uses simple line art to get its advice across.





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NO. 1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS  
**ImagineFX**  
PRESENTS



# EASY

*illustrator*

## HOW TO... SCULPT WITH CONFIDENCE

Be inspired by The Shiflett Brothers, as they craft a whimsical figure out of clay **Page 106**

### This issue:



**100 FXPosé Traditional**  
The best traditional art revealed.



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We visit Teaching Studios of Art.



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Brynn Metheney finishes up.



**114 First Impressions**  
Mark Zug's imaginary worlds.



# FXPosé *Traditional*

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

## **Rebecca Solow**

**LOCATION:** US

**WEB:** [www.rebeccasolow.com](http://www.rebeccasolow.com)

**EMAIL:** [solowillustration@yahoo.com](mailto:solowillustration@yahoo.com)

**MEDIA:** Mixed media



Rebecca has been illustrating young adult fantasy book covers, children's books and magazine stories since

2006. "I take inspiration from folk and fairy tales from around the world, and especially stories with strong and positive female characters," she says.

Her Russian heritage means she's familiar with the art and history of eastern Europe, which also informs her art: "I use acrylic and tinted gesso to paint over detailed graphite drawings." She enjoys living next to the National Zoo in Washington, DC, and can often be found visiting her animal neighbours.

## **IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"Rebecca's clean graphite drawings are lovingly brought to life with her colours. And I particularly like how her decorative borders help to further the story without being a distraction."

**Alice Pattillo,**  
Staff Writer

## **1 ON THE WOLF'S PATH**

Mixed media, watercolour paper, 11x16in

"This is the cover art for Luann Coyne's young adult fantasy novel, *On the Wolf's Path*. It's part of a trilogy and will be published later this year. With these books, I had the opportunity to develop a character over a series of covers."

## **2 THE GYPSY'S FRIEND**

Mixed media, watercolour paper, 11x16in

"Here's my cover art for *The Gypsy's Friend*, another of Luann Coyne's books. I love any chance to draw animals with personality and ladies with swords. I also got to indulge in my love of decorative borders."









 **Laura Siadak**

LOCATION: US

WEB: [www.fallenlights.net](http://www.fallenlights.net)

EMAIL: [laura@fallenlights.net](mailto:laura@fallenlights.net)

MEDIA: Watercolour, acrylic, tea



"Stories drive me to create - sometimes simple blurbs, a snippet of a memory, or a story that has lived on for generations," Laura reveals. "Some paintings even evoke a story from the viewer, who then passes it on to me."

In 2002, Laura graduated from Alfred University School of Art & Design with a painting and drawing bachelor's degree in Fine Art. Her teachers were abstract artists, which sometimes plays into how she goes about creating a painting, leaving some things a mystery to unravel!

### 1 MOON'S SECRET

Tea-stained paper, acrylic, 12x18in

"Some things are best left quiet, to hold on to an air of mystery. Who better to guard secrets than the moon? She's a quiet creature, watching down upon us all, never whispering of the things that she has seen."

### 2 WISH I MAY

Watercolour, 11x11in

"Wishes are bright, buoyant creatures. They're full of whimsy, light as hope, and fill the night's sky like a thousand stars every evening."

### 3 FOREST'S HART

Watercolour, 12x18in

"The trees only whispered that day. Birds stilled their fluttering wings. Wolves ran alongside, reverently quiet, what they once would have hunted. She moved through the meadow, passed beyond the trees, her spirit free from the earth."

## SUBMIT YOUR ART TO FXPOSÉ

Send up to five pieces of your work, along with their titles, an explanation of your techniques, a photo of yourself and contact details. Images should be sent as 300DPI JPEG files.

Email: [fxpose@imaginefx.com](mailto:fxpose@imaginefx.com)  
(maximum 1MB per image)

Post: (CD or DVD):  
FXPosé Traditional  
ImagineFX  
Quay House  
The Ambury  
Bath, BA1 2BW, UK

All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.





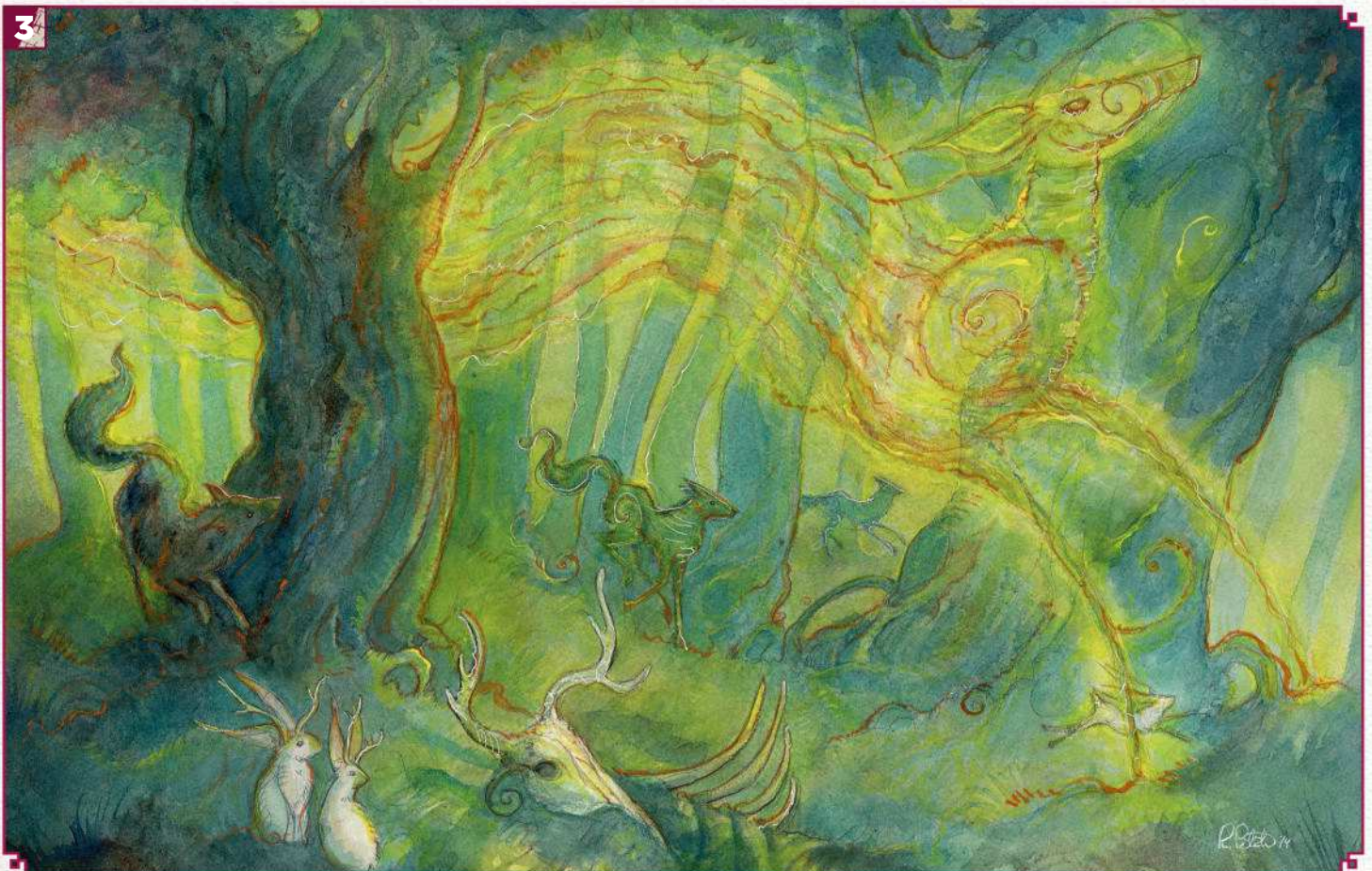


## IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Looking at the three artworks presented here, it's clear that Laura likes to make her shapes work just as hard as her colours and figures. The swirls in *Wish I May* add depth to a deceptively simple scene."

Cliff Hope,  
Operations Editor





# Creative Space



**HEY YOU!**  
Are you a part of  
a regular art class or  
group? Email us at  
[mail@imaginefx.com](mailto:mail@imaginefx.com)  
if you want to  
feature here!

## TEACHING STUDIOS OF ART ON LONG ISLAND

Founded by **ROB ZELLER**, these classes are bringing the seriousness and focus of a full-time atelier programme to part-timers and art enthusiasts

Long Island's Teaching Studios of Art began when founder Rob Zeller started plein air landscape lessons in the heart of New York's Central Park in 2008. But once winter weather arrived, it was too cold for Rob to give his direction outside, so his classes came indoors, to his own studios in Brooklyn.

By December of that year he was being invited to teach a group of artists in Plainview, Long Island. This, in turn, triggered him to follow his vision and start his own teaching studios.

Founding them a mere two months later, Rob's concept was simple: to form a

school that was classical in its teaching techniques, yet laid back enough in approach and made the seriousness and focus of a full-time atelier programme available in a part-time course.

Hiring the best faculty he could, Rob strives for one over-arching criteria for teaching: excellence. He believes it's important to teach a wide variety of approaches. "We, as an art school, are devoted to teaching traditional techniques to artists of all ages and skill levels," says the founder.

The school is planning to grow both their physical brick and mortar classes, and add online schooling to the mix. "We

In his figure drawing and painting class, instructor Rob Zeller teaches a system of structural figure drawing, which is followed up with a painting done in oils.

believe that replicating the high standards of the school in an online format is very important," says Rob. "We want to ensure that we enter with the most artist-driven user experience possible. We're helping to equip artist with the ability to express themselves. With good technique, the sky's the limit!"



**Rob Zeller, founder and instructor at Long Island's Teaching Studios of Art, received a BFA from the Boston Museum School and Tufts University, and an MFA from the New York Academy of Art. You can find out more about his school by visiting [www.teachingstudios.com](http://www.teachingstudios.com).**

Photo by Sandro Baebler





Students start painting with a monochromatic palette called a grisaille. Once that's dried, they then work on layers in full colour.

## FIGURING IT OUT

Figure-drawing classes bring out the best of the students on Long Island



Drawing techniques and grisaille are Aleta Heisig's focus.



The figure drawing and painting class is a popular option among students.



Beatrice Barkin busy in the figure drawing and painting class.



Heather Davenport's human anatomy skills are coming along nicely.



Caitlin Seib puts the finishing touches to her pencil art.



Aleta Heisig works on a colour layer over her grisaille art.

Jonathan Kaplan practises his figure-drawing skills.



Here's Tom Camillieri busy working on a structural drawing during a class.



The school is devoted to teaching traditional techniques to artists of all ages and skill levels.







# Workshops

Clay

Acrylics

## SCULPT A WHIMSICAL FANTASY FIGURE

Sculptors and brothers BRANDON and JARROD SHIFLETT unveil their process for crafting a character who's influenced by classic fantasy art... and Dr. Seuss



We're creating a character sculpture, in clay, and our goal is to open up a little window on to our sculpting process. Although we're sculptors, we're inspired by many old school painters and illustrators such as Frank Frazetta, Jeffrey Catherine Jones, and Moebius. Indeed, Moebius' influence will play a big role in this piece.

We don't do any sketches or drawings beforehand. Instead, we largely make up our characters as we move along, having only a rough idea of what we're going to create at the start of the sculpting. And our rough idea this time is a guy wearing artificial wings and a dragon costume, so that he can sneak into dragons' nests with the goal of stealing some eggs. We suspect this job might have a high turnover rate, as dragons are known to be very fond of their eggs! We'd like to achieve a little whimsy in this piece, with maybe even a touch of a Dr. Seuss vibe.

We're creating this sculpture in Aves Apoxie

Sculpt, which is a two-part modelling compound that cures when mixed together into a very dense and high-grade sculpting material. It hardens between two and three hours after you've mixed it together. It can be carved, drilled and sanded, and it stays crisp.

### BEFORE WE BEGIN...

For a sculpt like this, one needs an armature, because this clay won't stand on its own. In fact, one needs a wire basically anywhere there's a piece of clay sticking out: fingers, horns, wings and so on. The silver wire is an aluminium alloy armature wire, which can be bought in varying gauges to fit whatever size piece you're creating. We use lots of floral wire – the tiny, white, cloth-covered wire – to bind the armature wire together.

Once our armature is built, the real work begins, blocking our character in clay, like the first broad strokes of a painting, and then getting down to the details, using smaller and smaller pieces of clay. We'll be paying close attention to this guy's face, because we'd like for him to come across as a sympathetic character.

In the end, we'll apply a paint job with acrylic paints that'll separate the organic parts from the sculpted hardware parts more succinctly. This character is going to end up being about 13 inches tall, and we're calling the piece Dragon Division: Egg Appropriations Unit. It has a nice ring to it...

*The Shiflett Brothers, Brandon and Jarrod, have been sculpting comic book and fantasy characters for 25 years.*

[www.shiflettbrothers.com](http://www.shiflettbrothers.com)



**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
See page 6 now!



## ARTIST INSIGHT

### TOP HEAVY

We like big muscles, too, but make sure the upper body doesn't get so bulky that the armature you've allotted for the character's legs now appears too short. (We caution from lots and lots of experience!)



## 1 Armature and materials

The armature is built and all the wires are superglued into place. You can see many of the tools we like to use, including wire clippers, razor knives, handmade sanding pads and files. We use a tool called a burnisher, which is used for leather-making, for most of the real sculpting.



## 2 Blocking out the character

Gloves are necessary when mixing the Apoxie Sculpt. We're going to slowly build him up and these pieces are only structural; the true surface is still a ways off. His human head will go just under the dragon head, which at this point looks way too much like a chicken head!

## SCULPT TIP

### EYE SOCKETS

Many beginners place their figure's eyes on the face, without realising how deeply eye sockets retreat into a human head.



## 3 Identify reference points

We're beginning to pick out good reference points: the collar bone, sternum, belt line, groin and knees. Keep in mind the basic facial geometry that the eyes are in the middle of the head from top to bottom. The bottom of the nose is halfway from the eyes to the chin, and the bottom lip is halfway from the nose to the chin.



## 4 Compose the face and hand triangle

We start to sculpt some of the muscle groups, and the relaxed nature of the pose can be seen. We see the face and the two hands as forming a key compositional triangle in almost every sculpt we create. The natural, relaxed pose helps to play into the whimsical composition, countering the fact that he's wearing a slightly ridiculous dragon head.

## ARTIST INSIGHT

### PERSPECTIVE IS EVERYTHING

Get up from your sculpture, walk 20 or 30 feet away, and then look back at your piece. Does it still work from a compositional point of view? Distance makes your sculpt smaller, just like a thumbnail drawing, and the strength of design should still be evident.



## 5 Three-dimensional muscles

We like to jab the eyes in there quick so that we can start to get a feel for the character. Here we're beginning to find the tips or high points of the muscles. It's important to purposefully try and make every muscle as three-dimensional as possible, even if "skin" will cover it later.





## 6 Benefits of the dense sculpt material

Accessories make the Dragon Division Team Member. You need a lot of stuff when hunting dragon eggs! Luckily, the Apoxie Sculpt material becomes so dense and strong, it's easy to drill into it, put in some floral wire and then add more clay on top of that. Indeed, all his bags and packs are supported in this way.



### MATERIALS

#### MATERIALS

- Aves Apoxie Sculpt
- Almaloy aluminium alloy armature wire
- Floral wire
- Oatey bonding putty
- Superglue
- Styrene
- Plastic caps
- Wood

#### PAINTS

- Armory Grey primer
- Acrylic paints

#### TOOLS

- Vinyl gloves (powderless)
- Pliers
- Clippers
- Jewellers saw
- X-Acto blade
- Burnisher
- Ball tool
- Various small loop tools



## 7 Create custom sanding sponges

We like to cut apart 3M sanding sponges and glue them to toothpicks, to make little sanding tools. It's good to have a rough, medium, fine and very fine grade on hand. We wet-sand with water to avoid micro-scratches.



## 8 Developing the dragon head

Now we're rolling. The wings are taking shape, and the infamous chicken head is turning into a more intimidating dragon head, as originally intended. We're having ideas that are being attached and detached, coming and going, trial and error. ➡



# ARTIST INSIGHT

## MIRROR UNIVERSE

Hold your sculpture up to a mirror. We know that first look is horrifying, but all of your symmetry issues (especially facial) will be revealed. Now it's up to you to fix them!



## 9 Using styrene and plastic

The 'found' items we're using are bits of styrene and plastic where the wings attach to the main body. Sculpting metal surfaces and hardware is always tricky, so in this piece we're using a more beaten-up or junkyard metal look that's much more forgiving.

## 10 Revealing the true surface

At this point, fairly far along, it's time to give the character a coat of miniature primer. We're using Armory Grey Primer from Dork Tower. We apply a couple of light coats. This primer won't clog up any detail and enables us to see what the true surface of the piece looks like.

## INSPIRATION WWHD?

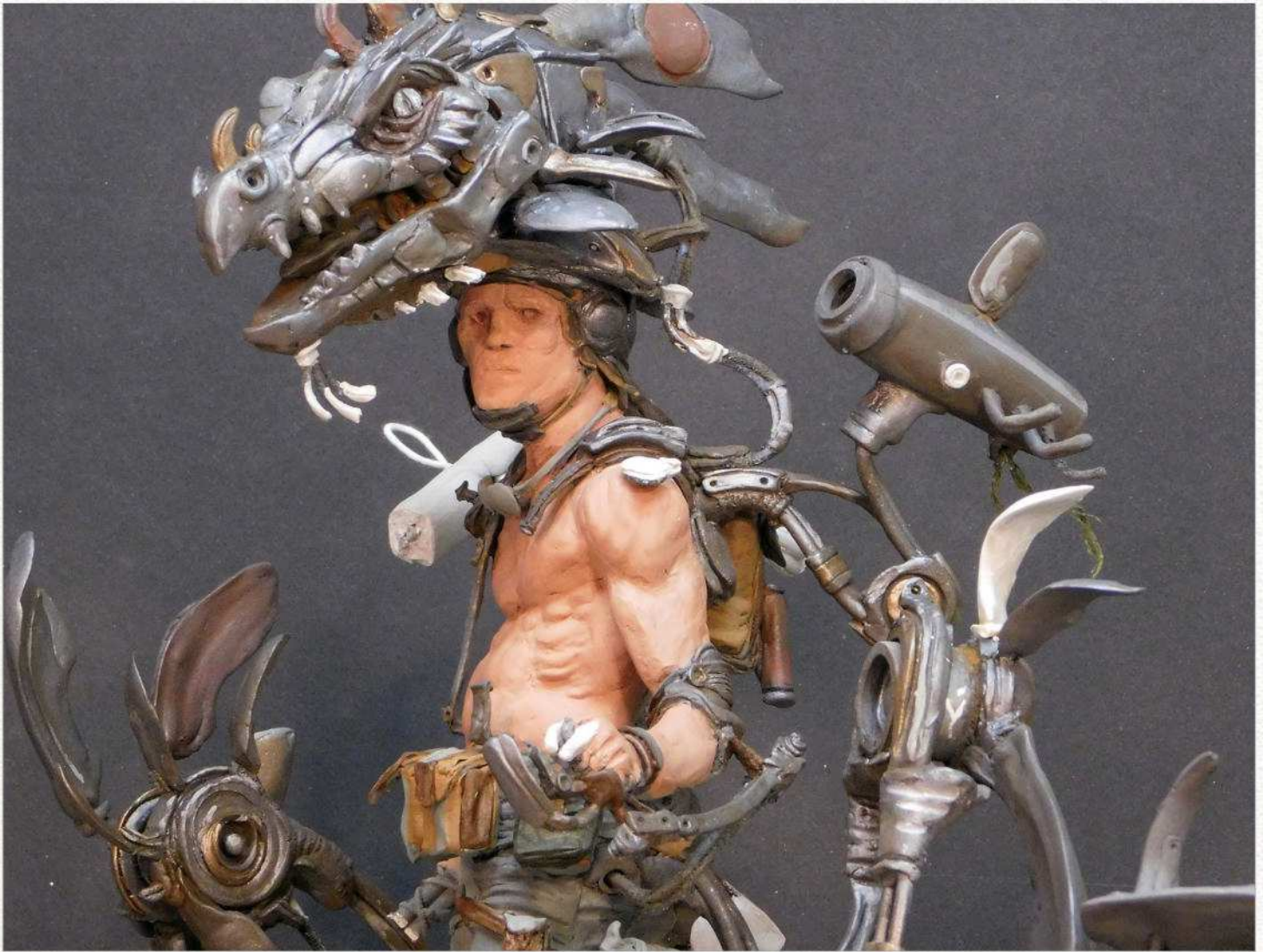
When creating clay figures, ask yourself, "What would Harryhausen do?" (That's Ray Harryhausen, of course!)



## 11 Working through multiple base coats

We start painting the base coats using acrylics and a lot of water. Base coats aren't the final colours; rather, they're darker versions of those colours. So we'll start dark and work our way lighter. We hand paint our sculptures: an airbrush would probably be quicker, but we enjoy painting this way with lots of washes and a little dry brushing.





## 12 *Muting the reds, greens and blues*

Sometimes our colour choices have more to do with what we don't want, and here we don't want anything vibrant. The character's meant to look apprehensive, almost sad, so we're going with muted and dull colours. There are reds, greens and blues, but they've all been muddled by the same brown so it mixes together and no one bit jumps out. We want things that are further away to be darker, while things that are closer or would be 'in the light' are given a brighter colour.



## 13 *Pushing the details*

Dirty washes, including sepia and the different colours that have been used, are applied liberally. Most specifically into the crevices and around any points of detail to help accentuate them. We use the lightest version of each colour to dry brush the tips and highest points of anything we want noticed more than other spots.

## 14 *Save time with Aves Apoxie Sculpt*

While our usual clay of choice is Super Sculpey Medium Blend, we really enjoy this Aves Apoxie Sculpt and it's speedy curing time with no baking needed. It's great stuff, and we have a lot of fun with it. Now this guy's ready to go hunting for some dragon eggs. Wish him luck... he's going to need it! ●



Pencil

Marker

# RESEARCH AND ADD FINISHING TOUCHES

In **BRYNN METHENEY'S** final lesson she elaborates on her creature design, imagining it as a species and showing aspects of its anatomy and behaviour

**T**hroughout this series, I've covered how to build an animal from the skeleton to the surface level. We can use those same techniques to show its anatomy, working from gesture, to a planar view, to a more detailed study of the inner anatomy. From here, we can explore the face in depth. This helps make the creature a solid creation.

We can use the Col-Erase pencils to help build up forms and then solidify details with the Blackwing pencils.

Vellum paper makes it simple to revise drawings as we find the details of our creature. Drawing it in motion to show behavioural attributes is also important.

Remember to use the boxes to help guide where your creature's anatomy will fall in perspective. This is where using reference becomes important. But don't be a slave to your reference. Instead, use it as a guide or as inspiration to grasp form, anatomy and overall gestures of animals and creatures. Observing how animals move and act in their habitat will inform

## MATERIALS

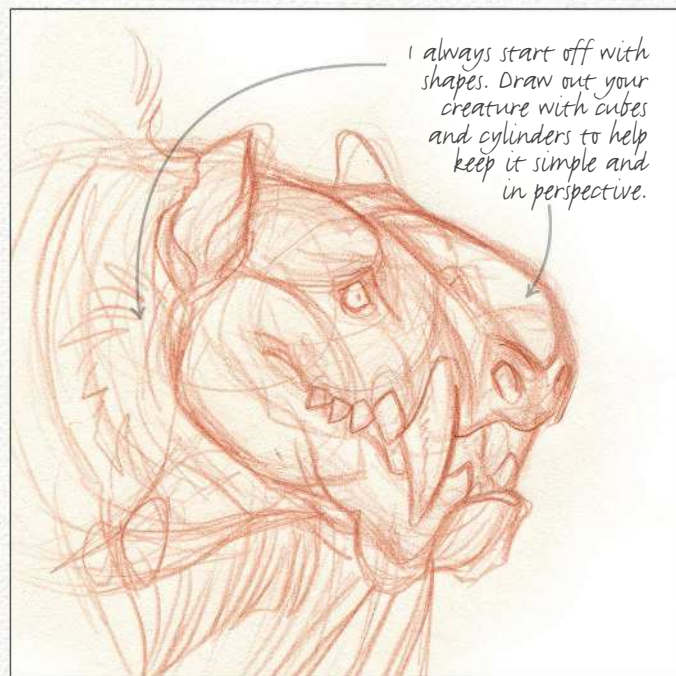
- Violet and Terra Cotta Col-Erase pencil
- Blackwing 602 pencil
- Staedtler rubber eraser
- Design vellum paper (cotton fibre)
- Acid-free sketchbook paper
- Copic markers

your drawing and help you create a more believable and grounded creature.

Write notes about what your creature eats, how it hunts or forages and moves. Consider what your creature could look like if it were male or female. Always look to nature: it's designed some of the most outlandish creatures in terms of colour, behaviour, dimorphism and anatomy.



*Brynn specialises in creature design, fantasy illustration and paints for film, games and publishing. [www.brynnart.com](http://www.brynnart.com)*



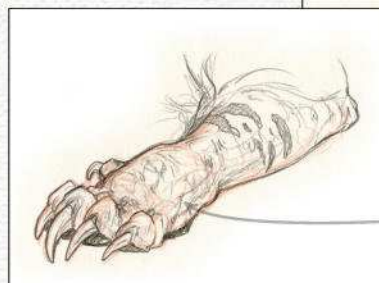
*I always start off with shapes. Draw out your creature with cubes and cylinders to help keep it simple and in perspective.*



**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
See page 6 now!

## 1 Callouts and detail

Think about the pieces that make up your creature design. I want to show the head and feet in detail. I begin by blocking in shapes with my Col-Erase pencil and solidify the details with my Blackwing pencil. This approach means I'm able to make sure I have the forms where I want them before I make things permanent.



*Things like paws and legs can also be drawn. Tackle planar shapes first before going into detail.*

*Texture is important. Always think about what kind of skin, scales or fur your creature might have. Reference is your guide!*



A simple skeleton can also help with the pose and anatomy of the creature.



Always look for the boxes that resemble the shoulders and hips of your creature. It helps keep things in perspective.



Look to real animals to see how they walk, lie down and play. These visual cues can help you pose your creature in a convincing way.



Always think about gravity and how it will affect elements such as hair and muscle. Everything has a weight to it and it helps to draw through forms to find it.

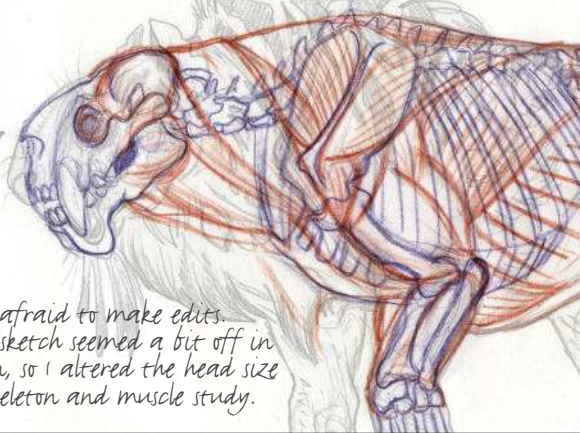
## 2 Posing your creature

I want to show my creature behaving in a variety of ways, so I can showcase its character. This creature is carnivorous and intelligent. Looking to real-world animals such as bears, hyenas, wolves and big cats, I can use them as a reference point to inform what sort of poses I want my creature to be in. I start with loose gestures to get the idea down first, then slowly build up with Blackwing lead.

## 3 More about posing

It's important to draw through your forms when you pose creatures. This way you can see where forms lie in front of each other. I think about the body in shapes, using cylinders and boxes to help flesh out the volumes. Take note when you're looking through reference about how skin folds, toe placement and expression, which all help to create a well-drawn pose. These details can help sell the idea of your creature.

Don't be afraid to make edits. My last sketch seemed a bit off in proportion, so I altered the head size in my skeleton and muscle study.



## 4 Think about anatomy

Consider the anatomy of your creature. In our concept stage, we explored the inner structure of this creature a bit. Now that we have our design laid in, we can go back and fill in the anatomy to help inform the design and those who might need to model this creature if it's being used for film or video games. Pay special attention to the joints and landmarks of the anatomy, such as the pelvis and scapula.

Using vellum paper, I can build up a quick skeleton and muscle overlay on my original sketch to really hash out the anatomy of the creature.



Using Copic markers, I can block in some colour ideas on my head study to see what ideas I like best. I print out a few heads on to copy paper with a photocopier.

## 5 Don't forget about colour!

The colour of your creature is also a key aspect to your design. Looking to nature will help you with ideas and you can always mix and match patterns. Try out ideas by printing out a sheet of drawings on a photocopier and experiment with markers or watercolours.



# First Impressions

Mark Zug

Mark's highly successful freelance career began by drawing what wasn't in front of him...



**Where did you grow up, and when did you realise you had a talent for art?**

Before age eight my memories were chiefly of Japan, where I lived for three years and also discovered I could draw. For years it was just drawing, with only occasional attempts at colour. Only when I decided to get serious at age 25 did I get some paints and start puddling around. Acrylic at first, but oil very quickly replaced that.

**Did your upbringing influence your painting style?**

Only insofar as I spent so much time drawing in imaginary worlds. Whether my upbringing or not, I disliked drawing what was in front of me. I always drew the inaccessible: dinosaurs, spaceships, aliens, imaginary creatures and so on. My painting as a young adult was most influenced by my idols, who include Frazetta, NC Wyeth, Jan Vermeer, JC Leyendecker, Howard Pyle and Maxfield Parrish.

**Did anyone in particular help you along your art journey?**

Other than my parents who kept me amply supplied with pencils and paper all through my childhood, I'd say Ken Laager, whom I met when I was a student and who took me on as a kind of painting assistant for a couple of years. He was my first close encounter with the actual profession of illustration that I wanted to be a part of.

**How has your painting process evolved over the years?**

I notice that I outlined my forms a lot more in the early days, probably under the influence of comic books. I still do it for effect here and there, but now what I really love is rounding the forms back, and pulling background light over their contours. I think I've also gotten more



## SANDS OF GORGOROTH

*Who are the inhabitants of Mordor, and what really happens when Gondor prevails?*

comfortable letting rough textures contribute to the realistic gestalt, whereas I used to see very tight control as the only answer. I hope this all adds up to "better!"

**What's been the highlight of your career so far? Any low points?**

Getting to work with Harlan Ellison, which kicked off my career and opened my eyes to a great many things, is right up there at the top. Alongside is getting to produce Sands of Gorgoroth for Pat and Jeannie Wilshire of IlluXcon. Close to that is my work on my self-commissioned Noble Gases, which I consider some of my best to date.

“I feel like I've put pretty much everything on the fire to achieve my artistic goals”



## PRAIRIE DRAGON

*A fantastical melding of central Asian and Great Plains cultures, and their special dragons.*

As for low points, right after my work on I, Robot was finished, I started on the graphic novel of the same name. The plug got pulled on that project, so I was suddenly out of work, having done no significant self-promotion. That was a bit of a scramble.

**What's been your most challenging commission or assignment?**

A tough one to answer... it's down to two. In Prairie Dragon I had to do a sweeping landscape that could have been pretty bland grassland, invent three engaging heroines and their canine companions, design a unique dragon, and invent the walking machine in the background inhabited by our tertiary characters. The machine uses a real articulated leg design by Theo Janssen, which I self-mandated to get right in every detail. And at 30x40 inches it's the largest canvas I've ever done.

The other is An Orc in the Shire, a self-commissioned piece that straddles the universe of The Lord of the Rings and that of the Last Ringbearer fan-fiction. It's just rich with detail that has to both pay tribute to and defy Tolkien. Both of these pieces took lots of research and digestion of reference.

**Your Dune art was your first game art.**

**Do you ever revisit the world of Dune?**

Only by reading the Brian Herbert/Kevin J. Anderson prequels and sequels. Their A Whisper of Caladan Seas short story, published in Amazing Stories in 2001, was the last Dune illustration I've done.

**What advice would you give to your younger self?**

I feel like I've put pretty much everything on the fire to achieve my artistic goals, and I was always aware of that. So my advice to the younger me would be to exercise more open-mindedness in my quest for knowledge. Also: don't depend on any one publisher or patron!

**Sum up your work in under 10 words.**

Classical adoration of the human, subhuman and superhuman-infested universe.

*After leaving art school Mark painted his portfolio while working as a machinist. In 1992 he quit all other work and embarked on the life of an award-winning freelance artist.*

*See more of his art at [www.markzug.com](http://www.markzug.com).*



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"I've always been impressed (and envious) by Brian's continual thirst for growth and rebirth with his art—both of which have been simply staggering. His endeavors prove again and again that he is an innovator and never an imitator."

- GREG CAPULLO ARTIST: BATMAN, SPAWN

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